

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

The role of the headteacher in facilitating workplace learning opportunities: an empirical investigation in three primary schools in Cyprus

Thesis

How to cite:

Michael, Androula (2012). The role of the headteacher in facilitating workplace learning opportunities: an empirical investigation in three primary schools in Cyprus. EdD thesis The Open University.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2012 The Author(s)



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000bfd9>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

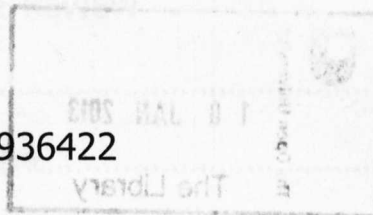
oro.open.ac.uk

The role of the headteacher in facilitating workplace
learning opportunities.

An empirical investigation in three Primary Schools in
Cyprus

Androula Michael X6936422

(Teacher's degree, B.Ed, MA)



23/11/2012

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)

DATE OF SUBMISSION : 31 MAY 2012

DATE OF AWARD : 9 DECEMBER 2012

Table of Contents

List of tables..... 7

List of figures 8

ABSTRACT 9

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 11

 The context of Cyprus12

 Rationale for embarking on this research.....17

 Research conceptual framework20

 Professional development 20

 Adult learning..... 21

 Workplace learning 21

 Leadership 22

 Research questions and direction of research23

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 27

 Introduction27

 Professional development.....27

 Adult learning theory.....35

 Workplace learning and professional learning communities.....39

 Workplace learning 39

 Formal and informal learning..... 44

 Mentoring and coaching 49

 Professional learning communities 51

 Leadership.....56

Leadership, professional development and workplace learning66

Conclusion..... 72

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS 75

Introduction..... 75

Methodology..... 75

Sample selection 82

The ‘insider’ researcher 85

Why not include observation? 89

Ethical issues and anticipated problems..... 90

 Informed consent91

 Ensuring protection from harm92

 Protecting privacy.....93

 Procedures: time scale.....96

 Research strategies97

 Interviews.....97

 Focus group interviews 103

 Teachers’ learning diaries..... 107

 Questionnaires for teachers..... 110

Validity113

Credibility (Internal validity).....114

Transferability (Generalisability).....115

Dependability (Reliability)116

 Triangulation 120

Data analysis121

Limitations of the research125

Conclusion 128

CHAPTER 4: FORMAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES 129

Formal opportunities for professional development129

Teachers’ views about formal opportunities for professional development 130

Headteachers’ views about formal opportunities for professional development 148

Inspectors’ views about formal opportunities for professional development158

Conclusion 166

CHAPTER 5: INFORMAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES 168

Informal opportunities for professional development.....168

Teachers’ views about informal opportunities for professional development169

Headteachers’ views about informal opportunities for professional development 193

Inspectors’ views about informal opportunities for professional development206

Conclusion 224

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, EVALUATION AND RECOMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH 226

Conclusions226

Evaluation230

Further research233

REFERENCES 236

APPENDICES

273

Appendix 1 - Brief description of the educational system in Cyprus	273
Appendix 2 - Letter addressed to headteachers	275
Appendix 3 - Interview schedule for inspectors.....	277
Appendix 4 - Interview schedule for headteachers.....	283
Appendix 5 - Teachers' questionnaire.....	288
Appendix 6- Learning diary.....	294
Appendix 7- Focus group interview schedule	295
Appendix 8- Characteristics of the teachers responding to questionnaires	300

List of tables

TABLES	TITLE	PAGE
Table 3.1	Pseudonyms and schools' names	91
Table 3.2	Time scale for data collection	95
Table 3.3	Number of questionnaires given out and returned	110
Table 4.1	Teachers' formal learning opportunities in their workplace during school year 2008-09	131
Table 4.2	Teachers' perceptions concerning formal learning opportunities	133
Table 5.1	Frequency of teachers' informal learning opportunities in their workplace during school year 2008-09, as self-reported	167
Table 5.2	The degree to which teachers believed that organisational - structural working conditions were present in their workplace	169
Table 5.3	The degree to which teachers believed that the stated cultural working conditions were present in their workplace	171
Table 7.1	Characteristics of the teachers who responded to questionnaires	293

List of figures

FIGURES	TITLE	PAGE
Figure 3.1:	Concept of leadership actions	121
Figure 6.1	Facilitating accessing to teachers learning opportunities	222

YOUR ACCEPTANCE

1 Student details

Your full name: Androula Michael

Personal identifier (PI): X6936422

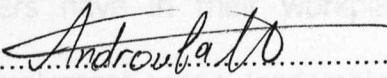
Affiliated Research Centre (ARC) (if applicable):

Department: Research School- Education

Thesis title: The role of the headteacher in facilitating workplace learning opportunities. An empirical investigation in three Primary Schools in Cyprus.

2 Authorisation statement

I confirm that I am willing for my thesis to be made available to readers by The Open University Library, and that it may be photocopied, subject to the discretion of the Librarian

Signed: 

Print name: Androula Michael

3 British Library Authorisation (PhD and EdD candidates only)

Date: 12/12/2012 DD/MM/YY

The Open University has agreed that a copy of your thesis can be made available on loan to the British Library Thesis Service on a voluntary basis. Please indicate your preference below:

☒ I am willing for The Open University to loan the British Library a copy of my thesis

OR

☐ I do not wish The Open University to loan the British Library a copy of my thesis

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores teachers' access to learning opportunities in their workplace and their headteachers' roles in enabling this in three primary schools in Cyprus. More specifically, the objectives are to investigate the types of formal and informal learning opportunities teachers have in their workplace, and the relationship between how headteachers implement school leadership and how this impacts on teachers' access to learning opportunities. It is based conceptually on professional development, adult and workplace learning and leadership and provides answers as to how headteachers can enact their school leadership in order to motivate and facilitate their teachers to be developed professionally, as reported by teachers, headteachers and inspectors. Mixed method research approaches, within the interpretivism paradigm, were used to address the research questions. Three medium-sized primary schools within a central area of Cyprus were selected to participate in the study, and the opinions of the headteachers, inspectors and teachers were collected using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, during the school year 2008-09. The findings revealed that all headteachers facilitated teachers' access to centrally organised formal learning opportunities, and the overall majority of teachers believed that there was equality of access to those opportunities. Each headteacher had organised additional learning opportunities. The type of formal, as well as the frequency and type of informal, learning opportunities were influenced by the way headteachers

exercised their leadership. The factors influencing teachers access to formal and informal learning opportunities and to more in number informal learning opportunities are the creation of a collaborative culture motivating and facilitating learning, encouraging reflection, dialogues, discussions, teachers' interactions, mentoring, peer observation and coaching, fostering mutual trust and respect and modelling learning. These results are consistent with previous research, but in addition they emphasise headteachers' formal and informal roles in facilitating teachers' professional development. The thesis concludes by discussing the implications for theory and practice which emerged from this study.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In Cyprus, there has been an increasing debate for several years concerning the expertise that headteachers need to have in order to lead primary schools effectively. Headteachers are teachers promoted mostly on the basis of their academic performance, teaching abilities and number of years in teaching (Pashiardis, 2004).

Political, social and cultural changes constantly influence the educational system of Cyprus, both directly and indirectly, imposing the need for leaders to develop themselves and their followers. Although the importance of teachers' continuous professional development is fully acknowledged, according to reform plans (Committee for Cyprus educational reform, 2004; Moec, 2007), Cyprus is still at the planning stage and there are no formal long-term strategies for teachers' in-service education.

The context of Cyprus, within which this research was conducted, influenced the way this study was undertaken. Headteachers' responsibilities, staffing and policy regarding the provision of professional development are considered the main aspects in this context because they have an impact on how, and to what extent, Headteachers undertake the role of facilitating the development of teachers within

the school. These issues are discussed below, following which the rationale for embarking on this research is presented.

The context of Cyprus

The highly conservative, centralised and state-controlled educational system of Cyprus (Pashiardis, 2004) obliges teachers and headteachers to change schools frequently. Appointments, transfers, promotions and discipline of all school staff and the Inspectorate are the responsibility of a five-member committee, appointed for a period of six years (Karagiorgi & Nicolaidou, 2009). Teachers have a life tenure contract, and once they are appointed the contracts can be rarely terminated – except in the case of serious legal or grave disciplinary matters. They are transferred from one school to another, usually at their own request, and remain in each school for a minimum two-year and a maximum six-year period. Thus, in almost all schools, personnel changes occur each year (further information concerning the educational system of Cyprus is given in Appendix 1).

Headteachers cannot stay in the same school for more than six years and have to apply to other schools for a transfer. According to the educational law (Cyprus Republic, 2008) of Cyprus, the headteachers' responsibilities and duties related to teachers' professional development are:

- To attend to the provision of opportunities to their staff for professional development and to keep them up to date on educational issues.
- To visit classrooms for the purpose of guiding, coordinating, inspecting and evaluating teachers and teaching, children's progress and compliance with regulations.

Thus, headteachers are considered responsible for providing access to teachers' learning opportunities, undertaking an instructional role and promoting teachers' professional development. Additionally, they have other roles whereby they also act as managers, evaluators and teachers. Their social role as headteachers can also be added to this list of responsibilities. However, some of their roles could be regarded as conflicting; for example, some teachers may believe that a headteacher's evaluator role is at odds with their instructional role.

Headteachers' responsibilities, obligations and duties are covered by the law but, additionally, they have a role to fulfil which goes beyond any form of legislation. It is what is expected from them by the students and their parents, their staff and other stakeholders and the community. It is their special contribution to their school unit. It could be argued that the fulfilment of this role is what makes a headteacher special and unique; it is what (s)he brings to the job.

Educational legislation does not oblige teachers to attend any formal training once they are appointed. Training provision is individual, informal and mostly voluntary

and it is not divided into structured practices (OECD, 2010). Newly appointed primary and secondary headteachers and secondary deputy headteachers follow compulsory training programmes after promotion (Eurydice, 2007/08). The official source of teachers' professional development is the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, which provides training at its own premises or in schools (OECD, 2010). The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute is a government department and thus no payment is needed. There are no funds available at a school level for any seminar/conference/workshop/postgraduate qualification or any other learning opportunities for staff, apart from European programmes.

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute offers in-service seminars, which have a non-obligatory character, a number of one-day conferences and school-based training in agreement with individual schools. Mandatory in-service seminars addressed to several groups of teachers (e.g. first grade teachers or subject teachers) are also offered by the Inspectorate.

Training offered by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute or the Inspectorate is usually of short duration and rarely lasts more than three working days. Therefore, no supply teachers are sent to schools. In order for a teacher to attend such a programme, they need to be nominated by their respective headteacher. The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute also offers optional seminars which can be attended by any teacher in his/her free time.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report (OECD, 2010) on teachers' professional development gives interesting information about this matter in relation to Cyprus. According to this report, the types of professional development undertaken by primary and secondary teachers are:

- Educational conferences, including Inspectorate seminars (48.1% of teachers)
- Cyprus Pedagogical Institute optional seminars (41.4%)
- Other Cyprus Pedagogical Institute seminars (6.3%)
- Ministry conferences (40.9%) and
- Overseas conferences (21.0%).

The same report adds that Cypriot teachers mentioned the following barriers to undertaking more professional development:

1. Conflict with work schedule
2. Lack of information about continuous professional development
3. Place of continuous professional development activity and
4. Unsatisfactory level of continuous professional development activity.

Similar types of professional development undertaken by teachers and similar barriers to undertaking more professional development are given by Martidou-Forsie et al. (2009).

Headteachers can make five important contributions to teachers' formal and informal learning opportunities:

- To inform their staff of what formal learning opportunities are available. They are the gatekeepers of knowledge, information and development, and it is their responsibility to inform their staff about any available opportunities, because when teachers are not made aware of, or offered, learning opportunities, their professional development is likely to suffer.
- To decide whether to allow a representative of the school to attend such an event, usually organised outside the school, and then help in identifying the most suitable member of staff to attend. This applies only when the learning opportunities take place during working hours.
- To facilitate the communication of new knowledge gained. Headteachers need to help to provide follow-up opportunities within the school in order to promote the dissemination of the new knowledge among the rest of the staff.
- To organise formal learning opportunities within their school and make the appropriate arrangements for the staff to attend. They can invite inspectors, lesson advisors appointed by the Ministry of Education to advise teachers of a district about a specific subject, Cyprus Pedagogical Institute staff and academic staff. The time available for these activities is mainly a set time for meetings, which take place once a week and usually last forty minutes. By prior arrangement with teachers the meeting can last longer or take place

during teachers' free time, although this happens rarely and most headteachers use the meeting time to present current managerial issues.

- To design a school development plan that includes teachers' professional development. Schools in Cyprus are not obliged to prepare development plans, so they usually do not do so. In some schools staff discuss their annual development plan during a staff meeting at the beginning of the year but they rarely prepare a written report, especially when the headteacher does not have a qualification in management.

Although headteachers do not have, or handle, any budget for staff professional development, they can offer to teachers, as analysed previously, formal learning opportunities. They can also contribute so that teachers can experience informal learning opportunities.

Rationale for embarking on this research

The 'Education & Training 2010' programme of the Council of Europe, and Cyprus educational reform, emphasise both teacher training and continuous professional development. In Cyprus, educational reform is ongoing and started with the report of the Committee of Cyprus educational reform (2004). The report underlined the importance of teacher development, emphasising that teachers need continuing professional support, development and information regarding recent research

findings and theory. The responsibility for this development is 'divided equally between the individual and the state' (p 238). Nevertheless, in practice the responsibility remains with teachers' and is based on their headteachers' decisions rather than their own – they have a life tenure contract and in Primary Education they are not obliged to undertake any other formal learning opportunities, besides those of their initial training, unless they are promoted to a headteacher position. Although many teachers undertake additional courses and degrees, and 70% of Cyprus's primary school teachers have a Master's degree (Martidou-Forsie et al., 2009), they do not have the incentive to pursue professional development.

Headteachers can permit teachers to attend formal learning opportunities during working hours and they can also encourage them actively. Nevertheless, it remains unanswered in what ways headteachers can, in practice, motivate and facilitate their teachers to be developed professionally. Thus, the growing importance of workplace learning has motivated me on undertaking this research.

Additionally, my interest in the headteacher's leading role in relation to teachers' continuous professional development arose from my own experience and interest. Within my 20 years as a teacher and assistant headteacher, I worked with nine different headteachers, each of whom exercised his/her leadership role as the facilitator of staff development very differently. The formal learning opportunities offered within the workplace varied in quantity and quality, which made me wonder whether there were better ways to encourage continuous professional

development. Moreover, in some cases I felt that all the school staff were committed to the idea of learning within their school and worked well together towards this goal, whilst in other cases I felt isolated and vulnerable when I needed help or wanted to take risks. Furthermore, I wondered whether there is a connection between how headteachers enact their leadership and teachers' access to learning opportunities and whether they can undertake any more initiatives, lead decisions or just interact with staff differently so that they can encourage teachers to improve their practices and, ultimately, students' achievements.

At the time I started my EdD studies, I had been working as an assistant headteacher in primary schools in Cyprus for five years. In 2009, I was promoted to the position of headteacher. Both my previous and current roles require knowledge on how to maximise teachers' willingness to improve their learning, while at the same time making a positive difference to pupil achievement and to the school as whole. Hence, I focused my studies on the headteacher's role in strengthening teachers' learning opportunities and on a workplace in which everyone can learn and progress and be willing and able to take advantage of learning opportunities.

Research conceptual framework

For the development of a conceptual framework in my study I identified four concepts. These concern professional development, adult learning, workplace learning and leadership.

Professional development

Educators have long considered professional development to be their right (Guskey, 2002b). Harrison et al. (2005) add that 'professional learning and development are both an entitlement and a responsibility for all teachers' (p.419). The notion of professional development has been discussed and researched over the past decades (Eraut, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Lovett & Gilmore, 2003; Pill, 2005; Snow-Gerono, 2005) and professional development is an essential component of retaining high quality teachers (Good & Weaver, 2003). This is true even in the Cypriot educational system, where teachers are often transferred because they can stay in one school for only two to six years. However, even if they are transferred, they can use their knowledge and skills in other Cypriot schools.

Adult learning

Adult learning theory is important, as teachers are adults bringing with them significant formal and informal learning. Knowles' (1980) assumptions underlying adult learning and the issues needed to be considered and addressed in formal learning (Conner, 2004) are important for the professional development of teachers, and schools have obligations to develop not only their students but also their staff. Lumby (1997) emphasises that a school or college which neglects its adult learners reduces its potential to be effective for the people who attend it.

Workplace learning

Workplace learning has recently become a focal point of interest, and it is characterised as potentially advantageous for both employers and employees (Lee et al., 2004). Workplace and organisational learning is under-researched (Eraut, 2004), which is especially true in the context of Cyprus because workplace learning involves more than simple training and development issues and can be more important than formal professional development programmes for the following three reasons:

- Workplace learning can counteract three of the obstacles reported by Cypriot teachers in the studies of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010) and Martidou-Forsie et al. (2009) regarding undertaking more professional development. That is, it can reduce the problem of conflicts with teachers' work schedules, eliminate issues of

difficulty with the venue of continuous professional development activity and of not receiving notification thereof.

- Workplace learning is characterised by flexibility and can be focused more easily on the needs, interests and abilities of teachers and at the same time be combined with pupils' needs (Lee et al., 2004).
- The pace of economic, political and technological change influences our social and work environment, and workplace learning is the answer to these challenges (Matthews, 1999; Lee et al., 2004).

Leadership

Leadership involves organisational improvement (Leithwood et al., 2006). A leader can be a person who influences, encourages, supports, empowers, helps, advises or sometimes guides pupils and teachers, while at the same time leading the whole school organisation. In short, the headteacher is able to lead and guide all members of the school community.

Lambert (1998a) suggests that leadership must be viewed as a verb, rather than a noun, by considering the processes, activities and relationships in which people engage. Anderson (2003) suggests that the developmental role of the leader should include, among others, setting a vision and ensuring a strategic approach to

staff development, leading by example and being the 'lead learner', participating actively in continuing professional development, knowing individual performance and providing feedback and opportunities for development.

In the next section I will analyse the focus of my investigation and research questions.

Research questions and direction of research

My research investigated the headteacher's role in encouraging access to workplace learning opportunities and strengthening informal learning opportunities. More specifically, this study focused on the following two objectives:

1. To investigate the types of formal and informal learning opportunities teachers have in their workplace, as well as the perceptions of and attitudes to such opportunities from the viewpoints of teachers, headteachers and inspectors.
2. To investigate the relationship between how headteachers implement school leadership and how this impacts on teachers' access to learning opportunities.

The objectives were turned into research questions as follows:

- 1.1. How do teachers and headteachers perceive learning opportunities?

- 1.2. How important and valuable do teachers consider different types of learning opportunities to be?
 - 1.3. What opportunities do teachers have for professional development in their workplace?
 - 1.4. What formal learning opportunities do teachers have?
 - 1.5. Do headteachers and teachers recognise informal learning opportunities?
 - 1.6. What informal learning opportunities do teachers have in their workplace?
-
- 2.1. How do headteachers implement school leadership within their school in relation to teachers' learning opportunities?
 - 2.2. Who has access to learning opportunities?
 - 2.3. Do all teachers have equal opportunities in continuing to learn?
 - 2.4. Does the way headteachers exercise school leadership affect teachers' access to learning opportunities?
 - 2.5. How do teachers perceive the headteacher's role in promoting ongoing teacher professional development?

My research provides a contribution to the theory and practice of education, since it is of relevance to headteachers, teachers and policymakers. It was found that the type of formal, as well as the frequency and type of informal, learning opportunities were influenced by the way headteachers exercised their leadership

and a number of other factors impacting on teachers' professional development within the workplace.

Chapter Two reviews the literature and focuses on the aspects of literature suggested by the conceptual framework. Thus, the professional development of teachers, adult learning, workplace learning and professional learning communities, as well as the role of headteachers in relation to their management of opportunities for continuing professional development, are discussed and developed.

Methodological choices and methods are the focus of Chapter Three, and mixed method research approaches, within the interpretivism paradigm are used to address the research questions. Chapters Four and Five present, interpret and discuss formal and informal opportunities for professional development, respectively. Findings are presented each sample school and then discussed thematically. The Final Chapter presents the main conclusions, discusses the usefulness of the study and suggests further research.

In this Chapter, I presented the focus of my research, which is teachers' access to learning opportunities within their workplace. I also introduced the conceptual framework of my research formulated from the concepts of professional development, adult learning, workplace learning and the notion of leadership.

Bearing in mind the above conceptual framework of my research, objectives and questions, I now turn to Chapter Two: the literature review.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The four main aspects of literature pertinent to this study, as suggested by the conceptual framework and discussed in the introduction, are professional development, adult learning, workplace learning and professional learning communities, as well as the role of headteachers in relation to their management of opportunities for continuing professional development. Each of these aspects will be developed and refer back to the research questions outlined on pp. 23-24.

Professional development

Definitions of professional development vary according to perceptions of the process, along with the purposes and the results of such development. Development implies both the process of becoming better and the product of the process. Professional development in education is related to the issue of how to improve the effectiveness of teachers, with the ultimate goal being the improvement of the students' quality of education (Bubb & Earley, 2010), as well as educational experiences and achievements.

Guskey (2002b) defines professional development programmes as '... systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students' (p.381). Day (1999) defines the term as the process:

... by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as agents of change to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives (p.4).

Two issues related to the above definitions need to be discussed. First, the common and most emphasised issue is that professional development leads to changes in teachers' knowledge and instruction, which in turn improve student learning (Guskey, 2002b; Day, 1999; Desimone, 2009). It is widely acknowledged as important for schools, as it contributes to improvements in teaching and learning (Goodall et al., 2005). Change, although not clearly defined, is interpreted as the enhancement of teachers' practices, knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Definitions imply a direction towards professional needs, i.e. activities should be related to problems faced by teachers. Continuing professional development should be aware of and address the specific needs of teachers (Lessing & Witt, 2007), and it must be carefully designed to meet their contextual needs. Moreover, a needs analysis should be an essential part of any professional

development programme (Bubb & Earley, 2009). As a consequence, the achievement of individual, group, school and national needs (Bubb & Earley, 2010) can be accomplished. Continuing professional development cannot take place in isolation, and the impact of programmes relies heavily on the way they are regarded and used by the school as a whole (Anderson, 2001). Thus, the school needs to know how to use professional development programmes in order for them to have an impact – professional development efforts and programmes need to be organised in such a way as not only to fulfil teachers' needs but also to be interesting and act as the motivation for new learning experiences. Teachers who feel excited by their own learning experiences are then likely to communicate that excitement to their students (Bubb & Earley, 2010).

The second issue is that definitions imply a continuing and systematic effort to develop a professional. A long-term and non-linear process (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000) is anticipated in order to implement change. Development cannot be forced (Bubb & Earley, 2010) and consideration needs to be given in order to ensure continuity.

Fullan (2005), Sharpe (2004) and others stressed the importance of continuing professional development, which they view as an ongoing process of reflection and action through which individuals take control of their own learning and development (Megginson & Whitaker, 2003). Continuing professional development is seen nowadays as imperative, not only in education but also in most, if not all,

professions. The ongoing character of continuing professional development is important for teachers (Anderson, 2003), since they are encouraged to enhance their current job knowledge and/or skills or add new ones, thus increasing their confidence and job satisfaction (Bubb & Earley, 2010). Improvement has to be a constant process. According to Guskey (2002a), it is recognised that the quality of schools is related to the quality of teachers and administrators working within them.

Sharpe (2004) suggests that professional learning is more than knowledge acquisition; it is about externalising and applying knowledge. She also states that professionals learn knowledge, values and competences, so, besides content knowledge, teachers need to update their pedagogical skills and sometimes also develop their values.

Development programmes need to focus on all three aspects referred to by Sharpe (2004), namely knowledge, values and competences. In addition, it needs to be stressed that professional knowledge, as described by Sharpe (2004), can be better acquired when emphasis is given to the processes involved in developing that learning and the products of teachers' learning. Continuing professional development programmes need to use processes which are themselves a source of knowledge, such as problem-solving and team working, instead of only focusing on the intended learning outcomes and delivering them in an inflexible way. These

programmes should also enable teachers to apply their newly acquired knowledge in practice (Lessing & Witt, 2007).

Desimone et al. (2002) agree that one of the characteristics of high-quality professional development, as taken from the research literature, is active learning opportunities. They add that other characteristics are:

- Duration of the learning activity
- Collective participation (e.g. teachers from the same school, the same department, the same grade level). Day (1999) emphasised both the collaborative and the individualistic character of professional development
- Type of activity (e.g. workshops, teacher networks, study groups).

Lessing & Witt (2007) add that successful continuing professional development focuses on critical thinking, reflection and self-direction and also develops excellence by means of competence, confidence and enjoyment and by adhering to teachers' contextual needs. Their research shows that teachers had negative attitudes towards a professional development programme because they felt that they had not gained enough applicable knowledge and skills or that it was not addressed to problems they were experiencing.

Reflection is considered one of the key ideas and features of all aspects of learning from experiences (Rogers, 2002; Boud & Walker, 2002), so it constitutes an important process in supporting learning and professional development (Boud &

Walker, 2002). Several authors (Schön, 1983; Kolb, 1984; Honey & Mumford, 1992) emphasised the idea of reflection in their theories. The idea of the reflective practitioner was developed by Kolb (1984), who described individual learning as a cyclical process within which '... learning is presented as a dynamic and fluid process which incorporates both direct experience and theoretical knowledge' (Harrison, 2003, p.33).

Reflection is considered the bridge connecting learners' direct experience to the production of generalised explanations and concepts, which are then tested in practice settings. Kolb (1984) placed the experience of the learner and the reflection on that experience at the heart of the learning process. The transformation of experience into learning is not automatic, though, and the process of producing new meanings and learning requires that learners are actively engaged in activities and processes.

Schön's notion of the reflective practitioner (1983) emphasises 'practice' as the source of knowledge and acknowledges the difficulty faced by professionals when they have to deal with problems in the practice setting. Reflective practitioners are autonomous professionals, who continually use problem-solving processes, enquiry and experience to make informed judgments and decisions. Thus, both Schön and Kolb emphasised the principle of reflecting on experience for improving action and professional practice.

Schön (1983) introduced the notion of reflection-in action, when noting what is happening at the time, and the notion of reflection-on action, when considering after the event occurrences and describing the outcomes. He suggested that the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning is one of the defining characteristics of professional practice.

Honey and Mumford (1992) also used the idea of reflection in their theory. One of the distinct learning styles they developed is the reflector, which looks at a situation from varying perspectives and considers actions and decisions thoroughly after having observed, reviewed and reflected.

As with all other perspectives of learning, Kolb's model has been scrutinised by theorists. One of its problems is stressed by Cowan (1998), who suggests '... the important existence of the tutor's facilitative inputs indicated a significant omission' (p.35) from the cycle of learning. Cowan suggests that teachers may need the support of a person, such as a 'tutor', to help them focus on what is important or to lead them on to new knowledge. That person might be a colleague, a mentor, a coach, a critical friend, the headteacher or even a team. Coaching and mentoring, which will be discussed in the next section, are collective processes, and both are related to Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, since their focus is reflection.

A second problem is that the model does not sufficiently address the existence of different cultural conditions and experiences (Anderson, 1988) whereby the

messiness and unpredictability of each experience are not taken into account (Smith, 2001). In their professional lives within the workplace teachers are faced with a vast variety of experiences, but there are several reasons why not all of those experiences will lead to new, useful and edifying professional learning (NCSL, 2010), as discussed below.

Firstly, some of the experiences may have a passive character and not be reflected in or on practice. Schön (2002) stated that a practitioner's reflection serves as a 'corrective to over-learning'. However, a practitioner may not search for meaning in an experience (s)he has had. Secondly, experiences may be reflected on but inadequate, inappropriate or badly used activities may not lead to learning (Boud & Walker, 2002). Thirdly, new knowledge or other objects of reflection acquired, such as skills and feelings, may not be useful for teachers' practice.

Cowan (1998) suggested a third type of reflection – 'reflection for action' – as a '... reflection which establishes priorities for subsequent learning by identifying the needs, aspirations and objectives, which will subsequently be kept prominently in the learner's mind' (p.37). Thus, he gives reflection a different perspective to that of Kolb's, who presented it as a one-way, almost closed-ended, activity. Cowan takes into account individuals' diverse needs and goals.

Professional development theory, the characteristics of professional development programmes and the idea of reflection as presented by Schön (1983), Kolb (1984),

Honey & Mumford (1992), Rogers (2002) and Boud & Walker (2002) lead me to identify which learning opportunities offered within the workplace can contribute to professional development. Cowan's (1998) statement on the important existence of a tutor's facilitative inputs emphasise the need to investigate not only headteacher roles within the framework of theory of leadership but also the role of other colleagues within the workplace. In addition, the need to examine how teachers can be encouraged to learn individually or collectively from experience, as adult learners, results from the idea of continuing professional development (Sharpe, 2004; Fullan, 2005). Adult learning theory, discussed below, focuses on how adults learn best.

Adult learning theory

Professional development has become an imperative in today's schools, as discussed in the previous section, so understanding the characteristics of adult learners is an important starting point. The whole process of professional development can be seen essentially as adult education. As learners, teachers need to be given opportunities, formal or informal, individual or collegial, in their workplace or elsewhere to improve their knowledge and skills and challenge their attitudes.

Knowles proposed the concept of 'andragogy', which he defined as 'the art and science of helping adults learn' (1980, p.43). The assumptions underlying andragogy, as defined by Knowles (1980), describe adult learners as those who:

- Know what they need to learn and can direct their own learning
- Have learning needs closely related to changing social roles
- Are able to utilise prior experience
- Are problem-centred and interested in immediate application of knowledge
- Are motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors.

The above assumptions emphasise two aspects of this study. First is the fact that teachers as adults are self-directed and are expected to take responsibility for decisions, choosing what they need and what they want to learn. Secondly, the changing social and professional roles of both teachers and headteachers within their schools identify their need, and in most cases the motivation, as adults to learn. Particularly for headteachers, the challenge is how to facilitate teacher learning (Bezzina, 2008). Thus, additional skills are needed in today's headteachers so that they can fulfill their duties effectively (Clement and Vandenburghe, 2001; Lindstrom & Speck, 2004).

In practical terms, Knowles's model asserts that the following issues need to be considered and addressed in formal learning (Conner, 2004):

- Learners should be shown how to direct themselves through knowledge and start by focusing on the importance of learning specific knowledge
- Instruction for adults needs to focus more on the process and less on the content being taught
- The topic should be related to the learner's experience
- Learners should be motivated to learn, and sometimes they also need help to overcome inhibitions, behaviours and beliefs/preconceptions about learning.

These issues are related to the professional development of teachers, as discussed in the previous section. The input and motivation from a facilitator (Conner, 2004) are related to Cowan's (1998) theory. The implications of the theory of adult learning can be applied to teachers' initial education and continuing professional development. There are nevertheless three difficulties related to the adult learning theory which need to be raised and taken into account when developing professional development programmes.

The first difficulty with Knowles's concept of adult learning, as raised by Reischmann (2004), is that it assumes that becoming an adult means becoming self-directed. However, sometimes teachers' decisions on what to learn might not derive from interest, pure enthusiasm or even passion, as sometimes the need can be imposed by their organisation or other factors. This fact needed to be

investigated in my study because whenever teachers are 'sent' on courses, one or more of the above assumptions might be neglected or even forced, in which case teachers might not behave in accordance with the above description of adult learners.

A second difficulty derives from the assumption that all adults are open to new knowledge and that new knowledge and experience are associated unproblematically with chronological age and other factors such as gender. A third difficulty is that it is also assumed that learning material for adults is regarded as very learning-centred. The last difficulty was also taken into consideration in my study and was included in my research tools, in order to be investigated.

The most important contribution of adult learning theory is perhaps the idea that adults can learn not only from their experiences but also can direct their own learning. Thus, self-directed learning, which can take place in all sorts of informal situations, not just formal courses, can help teachers to develop professionally. In the section below the focus is on workplace learning and the formal and informal learning experiences this can offer to teachers.

Workplace learning and professional learning communities

This section defines workplace learning and presents how the concept has been approached by theorists and researchers over time. Following this introduction, several types of learning opportunities which can be offered within an educational setting and can help teachers to develop professionally are presented.

Workplace learning

Workplace learning is considered a complex concept (Lee et al., 2004) and as such is subject to very different definitions (Devos, 2002), since it involves more than simple training and development issues and teachers may have varied learning opportunities within their school workplace. Matthews (1999) defines workplace learning as:

... the process of reasoned learning towards desirable outcomes for the individual and the organisation. These outcomes should foster the sustained development of both the individual and the organisation, within the present and future context of organisational goals and individual career development (p. 20).

At the heart of the definition is its conceptualisation as being potentially advantageous for both the individual and the organisation and consequently, in the case of schools, for the whole educational system as well as for society (Lee et al.,

2004). Thus, identifying individual and organisational priorities is a prerequisite (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004).

The flexibility of workplace learning (Lee et al., 2004) and the possibility of being organised according to the specific programmes and needs of schools are important advantages. Finding time for development within the workplace is both a problem and a benefit, compared to the centrally organised professional development of teachers. Bubb & Earley (2010) present workable ways and ideas to find time for professional development within schools, while acknowledging that providing time is a problem.

Lee et al. (2004) add that, besides flexibility, workplace learning can also be characterised by continuity and be focused on educators' needs and possible interests. These characteristics are some of the qualities of high-quality professional development, as discussed in the previous section. These are also reasons for the importance of the workplace in promoting teachers' professional development, which can also explain why some theorists, such as Fullan (2007) and Bubb (2005), suggest that continuing professional development will increasingly be school-based and teachers will coach and mentor each other. The term 'school-based learning' is regarded as more related to formal learning and thus a narrower term than 'workplace learning'. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the term 'workplace learning' was preferred.

In the 1980s, more attention was given to the influence of the workplace on workers. Rosenholtz (1989) brought teacher workplace factors into the discussion of teaching quality by emphasising the idea of improving the quality of learning by using organised collaboration. She studied the workplace factors that support quality teaching and found that teachers who feel supported in their ongoing learning and classroom practice are more committed and effective than those who do not receive such confirmation.

When aiming at teachers learning within the workplace, two issues need to be considered. 'Teaching uncertainty' is the first issue and is experienced by many teachers when they have to decide how teaching should best be done in ways that enable their students to learn and grow (Rosenholtz, 1989). Rosenholtz also explains that teachers can satisfy their students' widely varying needs when they are qualified with technical knowledge encompassing the skills, procedures and methods that help pupils progress academically. Uncertainty can be limited by sharing ideas in collaborative settings, thus reducing uncertainty as well as teacher isolation, the reduction of which is important since, according to Little (1990), it can contribute to improved learning. As such, it was also investigated in my research.

The second issue is related to 'threatened self-esteem' (Rosenholtz, 1989). Rosenholtz states that most adults like to think well of themselves and therefore they avoid situations where their performance competence may conceivably be

called into question, thus threatening their self-esteem. Therefore, teachers need to be involved in learning within their workplace in ways whereby their self-esteem is not threatened.

Hargreaves (1994) stated that one 'commonly advanced solution' (p.16) employed to reduce teachers' uncertainty is to develop a 'professional culture of teaching among small communities of teachers in each workplace' (p.17). Peterson (2002) stressed that the school culture can enhance or hinder professional learning, as it can have an incalculable impact on the success of programmes and people (Derpak & Yarema, 2002).

The way the existing or the new knowledge gained by a teacher is passed to other staff is a characteristic of the culture of the school. Hargreaves (1994) studied teaching cultures, which constitute one of a school's subcultures (Stoll, 2003; Tomlinson, 2004) within the school workplace and are particularly important in this study. Within these cultures, teachers' workplace professional development will be facilitated or inhibited. According to Hargreaves (1994), there are four teaching cultures:

- Individualism, where the autonomy, isolation and insulation of teachers prevail
- Collaboration, where teachers spontaneously and voluntarily work together, without being obliged to do so

- Contrived collegiality, where collaborative working relationships are compulsory, imposed with set times and places for collaboration
- Balkanisation, where teachers are neither isolated nor work as a whole school. Smaller collaborative groups may form.

Individualism is related to a school culture of non-participation. Woods et al. (2004) and Bezzina (2006) highlighted the effect of a sustained culture of non-participation, which can result in passivity when new and participative opportunities are offered. Morris et al. (2003) commented that, sometimes, new knowledge often faces school environments that are, at their best, not structured to allow teachers to share what they learn and, at their worst, may even be hostile to the new ideas (p.128). Thus, in my study, the organisational, structural and cultural working conditions of my sample's schools were investigated, as school leaders can contribute to teachers' professional development through the creation of structural and cultural workplace conditions (Clement and Vandenberghe, 2003). In addition, the issues of organised collaboration (Rosenholtz, 1989; Little, 1990) and teachers' feelings of being supported (Rosenholtz, 1989) were also investigated, as they are important actions that can be undertaken by headteachers when promoting professional development.

Workplace learning can take a variety of forms, including formal and informal (Matthews, 1999; Lee et al., 2004). The next section provides an overview and critical discussion of these issues.

Formal and informal learning

Formal learning is planned learning that derives from activities within a structured learning setting (Harvey, 2004). In this study, the term 'formal learning opportunities' is defined as the learning opportunities that teachers are given officially at their school or elsewhere. They are organised and methodical, aiming at a specific purpose. Examples of formal learning opportunities are:

- Conferences/seminars/training sessions
- Workshops
- Staff meetings aiming at communicating specific knowledge/skills/attitudes to teachers.

Informal learning occurs in everyday situations and in a variety of places such as at home and at work: 'Informal learning refers to learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities' (OECD, 2006, p.4). Informal learning opportunities are created in everyday school routines (Eraut et al., 2002; Marsick & Watkins, 2002; Eraut, 2004) and are often experienced in a 'group setting, where one's felt clumsiness is all too apparent, particularly to those who 'know' each other' (Barnett, 2002). Informal learning opportunities are defined as those everyday opportunities, perhaps more relaxed and friendly, when teachers usually have the chance to learn something new related to their profession. They also

include learning that is organised outside the formal learning system. Informal learning in this study covers all learning opportunities that are not formal and is also conceptualised so as to include incidental learning as well. Incidental learning occurs in any organisation during chats with colleagues over coffee, when discussing job-related information in team meetings and staff groups, when reading reports, newsletters (Candy & Crebert, 1991), participating in research discussions with others or even through observing other teachers in the playground or on school trips.

Informal learning opportunities will include a combination of learning acquired from other people and learning acquired from personal experience, often both together. More specifically, besides incidental, informal learning will include the following (several of these are mentioned by Fielo in Devos, 2002):

- Individual informal learning based mostly on teachers' experience at work, e.g. when a teacher learns discipline techniques just by reflecting on strategies (s)he has used
- Team learning – within more formal settings, e.g. management team, subject-based teams
- Through collaboration or collegial processes, e.g. following a performance presentation a group of teachers learn how to improve it by reflecting on it, by observing the process and the product of their work, by comparing it with their colleagues, by hearing comments, by observing the behaviour of participants and other activities

- Organisational learning and changing its practices as a consequence of the collective insight of members of that organisation, e.g. when the school is faced with a crisis situation and all its mechanisms need to be involved in order to make decisions for the resolution of the problem.

Three issues need to be stressed concerning the concepts of formal and informal learning, though.

Firstly, these ideas are not regarded as separate entities but as continuum, shading gradually into one another (Ellis, 1990). When teachers are engaged in formal learning activities, informal learning opportunities may arise, but the reverse is also true, as Colley et al. (2002) found that there are few, if any, learning situations where either informal or formal elements are completely absent. Boundaries or relationships between informal and formal learning can only be understood within particular contexts.

The second important issue is the fact that not every learning opportunity can contribute to new, useful or important learning (Boud & Walker, 2002; Cole, 2004). Informal learning can only take place if the teacher is open to learning (Knowles, 1980) and engages in the reflective process (Kolb, 1984).

The third dimension of learning opportunities is their collective character in contrast to their individual character. Learning might be considered a personal

process occurring in the mind of the learner, whereas knowledge can be regarded as an entity existing outside ourselves (Harrison, 2003). However, this idea has been challenged by the social learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Collective learning pre-supposes sharing experiences and ideas, a dialogue or a discussion process, which may include constructive conflict (DiPaola, 2003). Furthermore, 'dialogue is a reflective learning process in which group members seek to understand each other's viewpoints and deeply held assumptions...' (Kohm & Nance, 2007, p.16). Learners are engaged in a continuing dialectic between the subject, other people and the culture in which they operate (Harrison, 2003), so dialogue is a way of making people reflect.

In contrast to dialogue, discussion is a 'convergent conversation with informed decisions' (Kohm & Nance, 2007, p.16). When headteachers and staff have an issue to discuss, they present their ideas, share meanings, put forward beliefs and finally attempt to reach decisions, sometimes by adopting a majority view or else by reaching a consensus. Reflection is a key ingredient of the discussion process.

Collective learning, accomplished through collaboration, is related to concepts such as team, collegial or organisational learning, but they are not identical ideas. As such, a distinction between the terms 'collaboration' and 'collegiality' needs to be made here. Collaboration refers to the processes of 'working together' and 'team working' (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004), whereas the concept of collegiality adds an element of mutually respectful and uncompetitive collaboration. Thus, collaboration

focuses only on the product, whereas collegiality focuses on both the product and what the participants gain from their collaboration. Lindstrom & Speck (2004) state that collegial usually refers to adults:

- Talking about practice
- Observing each other
- Engaging together in shared work
- Teaching each other.

Team working emphasises the development of the team in the process of collaboration. According to O'Neill (2003), 'a team is a small group of people who recognize the need for constructive conflict when working together in order for them to make, implement and support workable decisions' (p.216).

Team learning stresses the notion of constructive conflict (DiPaola, 2003) and the need for individuals to listen, to understand their teammates and to formulate their idea, express it and gain feedback. Some settings where team learning can be developed are the organisation in which they work and may include meetings between staff, the senior management team and subject teams.

Coaching and mentoring are collegial approaches to professional development (GTCNI, 2010), which take place within the workplace and are discussed in the next section.

Mentoring and coaching

Mentoring is defined as an interpersonal relationship in which a senior/older or more experienced person helps and supports the development of a younger/junior or inexperienced person (Gibson et al., 2000; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Tomlinson, 2004).

The activity of mentoring can be used to support teachers through a combination of coaching and counselling (GTCNI, 2010). Anderson & Shannon, cited in GTCNI (2010), state that, from the literature and from historical meaning, mentoring is a process characterised as intentional, nurturing, insightful, supportive, protective and role modelling.

It is recognised that there is strong connection between mentoring and leadership (Gibson et al., 2000; Rosser, 2005), as both involve developing people. Gibson et al. (2000) stated that mentoring is a natural part of the leadership dynamic and any kind is beneficial to employees, especially to those who are less experienced. Nevertheless, it must also be stressed that mentors themselves gain from the mentoring relationship (GTCNI, 2010), as it is a reciprocal process.

Coaching is a narrower concept, more task-related, usually short-term and focused on specific development areas. During the coaching process the focus is on

performance. According to Tomlinson (2004), 'executive coaching might be defined as helping professional people to reflect upon their work in rigorous ways and to establish new patterns of behaviour' (p.98).

Coaches may not be as competent at the performance as the people they are coaching, and some of the qualities they need are: to be a good listener, capable of handling both personal and professional issues sensitively, to have experience, the capacity to see the world through another's eyes, the ability to change without threat, questioning skills, building rapport, building trust, to be non-judgmental, candid and challenging, able to work from other people's agendas and give encouragement and support (Tomlinson, 2004).

Mentoring and coaching have much in common and can provide plenty of opportunities for those involved in the processes of learning and developing. Teachers can be guided to develop their own ideas and experiment with them in order to determine their success. Collaboration may include discussion, teaching, modelling and encouraging, counselling, reviewing, observing, analysing, reflecting, guiding and giving feedback, processes which can contribute to development. The role of mentor and coach can be undertaken by headteachers or others within the school organisation.

So far, the literature has presented us with workplace learning opportunities that can be offered to teachers for their ongoing learning. As the discussion develops

we can conceptualise teachers as active participants within their workplace, aiming at their professional development individually or collectively. They are adults who can form communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2002) and professional learning communities (Hord, 1997; DuFour, 2004; Bolam et al., 2005), which can both minimise their isolation and maximise interaction and learning. The next section discusses the idea of professional learning communities.

Professional learning communities

Lave & Wenger (2002) define a community of practice as a 'set of relations among persons, activity and world' (p. 115). They regard learners as existing within a social and cultural world that influences and is influenced by them, as they continue to adapt, evolve and learn. They also prioritise the importance of participation in the practices of a community and community identity as primary features of learning.

Professional learning communities (Hord, 1997; DuFour, 2004; Bolam et al., 2005) are communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2002), as they encompass members who prioritise the importance of their participation in the practices of their organisation. Their members are practitioners who build relationships that enable them to learn from each other, and they are related to the idea of the learning organisation (Senge, 1990; Thompson et al., 2004), which is described as a model of how organisations should be structured if they are to achieve maximum learning

(Senge, 1990; Boyd & Hord, 1994). Learning organisations have the capacity to transform themselves (Marsick & Watkins, 2002), the flexibility to respond more swiftly to challenges and to operate more effectively in contemporary society (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005). A school aiming at becoming a learning organisation develops a professional learning community.

The idea of teachers participating in their professional communities is gaining ground nowadays and demolishes the myth of 'teaching as a lonely profession' (Fullan & Newton, 1988, p.418). According to Hargreaves & Fullan (2000), '...[t]here is increasing commitment to the idea that all teachers are more effective when they can learn from and be supported by a strong community of colleagues' (p.52). Thus, the next section describes the professional learning community concept, its various definitions in relation to its main characteristics and its importance in improving student and teacher learning.

Several definitions of the professional learning community concept have been developed over the last two decades. Hord (1997) defines a 'professional community of learners', as one in which a group of educators 'continuously seek and share learning and then act out what they learn. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals so that students benefit' (p.6).

DuFour (2004) adds the idea of creating structures to promote collaborative culture. He underlines the development of teams aiming at focusing on improving

student achievement. The central role of social learning is emphasised and consequently so is the importance of modelling behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions of others. DuFour (2004) also stresses the need for educators who work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all: 'Schools exist to promote learning in all their inhabitants' (Barth, 2002, p.9). In other words, knowledge should be promoted not only to pupils but also to other teachers, to the headteacher and to parents through collaborative processes and within a learning culture.

Bolam et al. (2005) add the key component of sustainability and the inclusion of all professionals, defining an effective professional learning community as that which '... has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning' (p.131). Improving the learning and achievement of pupils is therefore the ultimate goal. They state that effective professional learning community fully exhibit eight characteristics:

1. Shared values and vision
2. Collective responsibility for pupils' learning
3. Collaboration focused on learning
4. Individual and collective professional learning
5. Reflective professional enquiry
6. Openness, networks and partnerships
7. Inclusive membership

8. Mutual trust, respect and support.

All of the characteristics above – except that relating to reflective enquiry – are related to the concepts of sharing, collaboration and collectiveness and apply in general to the way each person influences, relates and interacts with the other and hence to the concept of leadership. Nevertheless, all eight characteristics are related to the culture of the school.

The reflective professional enquiry characteristic is related to Kolb's theory of reflective practice (1984) and Schön's notion of the reflective practitioner (1983) discussed above. A school culture that encourages constant reflection could contribute to the development of professional learning communities.

Trust is a fundamental element in a school learning culture and can contribute to professional development (Clement & Vandenberg, 2003). Trust is also 'the central issue in human relationships both within and outside organisations' (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p.7). Teachers need to 'count on the leader to do what (s)he says and play fair' (Keohane, 2005; Matthews, 2009). In addition, teachers have to trust their leaders, especially if they are to 'take risks' in dealing with emotions (Downey et al., 2011). Headteachers also need to be trusted, particularly when they are trying to help teachers to see possibilities in problems, learning opportunities and in mistakes in order to accelerate learning and move the school forward (Kohm, 2007).

Supportive and collective efforts are at the heart of professional learning communities. Southworth (2001) states that one of the links between teacher professional development and a school's capacity to grow and improve is 'the existence of a culture that supports strong professional ties between teachers' (p.2).

Bolam et al. (2005) also emphasise that although the characteristics and processes of professional learning communities may be similar in different schools, context and setting are crucial to any understanding of how these characteristics and processes play out in practice. They suggest that each school staff member will probably need to formulate his or her own working definition of a professional learning community.

Bolam et al. (2005) also consider leadership as an important resource for professional learning communities, both in terms of headteacher/principal commitment and shared leadership. Hord (1997) adds that the leader's support is essential in order to transform the school organisation into a learning community and to nurture actively the development of the entire staff cohort as a community. Thus, the section below discusses the idea of leadership and how school leaders can facilitate the professional development of teachers.

Leadership

Strong leadership is one of the distinguishing attributes that effective schools research consistently identify as characteristic of schools in which students are successful (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). After first discussing the concept, I present several leadership perspectives and theories and describe how these can guide headteachers to undertake a 'key' role in encouraging and facilitating teachers' access to learning opportunities.

Bush (2003) identifies three main characteristics of leadership. Firstly, he discusses the dimensions of leadership as influence rather than authority. Influence is considered an intentional process which may be exercised by groups as well as individually. However, it can also be assumed that charismatic leaders may influence followers without intending to do so, whereas if someone in a position of authority is not a natural leader, other individuals tend to make their influence felt.

Secondly, he argues that leaders are expected to base their actions on clear, personal and professional values. He maintains that 'values – free policy implementation can be regarded as 'managerial' (Bush, 2008, p.278). Values are usually the basis against which people judge what is right or proper practice. Consequently, conflicting values and different ideas may create tensions which need to be managed for the benefit of the organisation. Leaders' values and beliefs

can influence the way headteachers exercise their leadership and select a style they believe is more appropriate for a specific occasion. Thirdly, a very important characteristic of leadership is vision, which 'has been regarded as an essential component of effective leadership for almost 20 years' (Bush, 2008, p.287).

Collins (2001) discusses a 'level 5 leader' in his book 'Good to Great', which refers to the peak of a five-tier hierarchy of leadership characteristics. Level 1 is described as the highly capable individual, level 2 as the contributing team member, level 3 as the competent manager. Collins (2001) believes that an effective leader who 'catalyzes commitment to, and vigorous pursuit of, a clear and compelling vision, stimulating higher performance standards' (p.20) is a level 4 leader. Nevertheless, leaders of good-to-great companies are on a higher level. These level 5 leaders are '[individuals] who [blend] extreme personal humility with intense professional will' (Collins, 2001, p.21). They are not just humble, 'self-executive' or 'servant leaders', but they are also ferocious and determined to do whatever needs to be done to make their organisation great, no matter how big or hard the decisions. Level 5 leaders display a 'compelling modesty, are self-effacing and understated' (Collins, 2001, p.39). They channel their ego needs away from themselves and into a larger goal of developing their organisation. The idea of a level 5 leader, when transferred to the school framework, is related to learning-centred leadership, an idea discussed by Matthews (2009) and Robinson (2010), since the focus of the headteacher is on improving students' learning opportunities and outcomes.

Learning-centred leadership is also referred to in the literature as 'instructional leadership', which emphasises the development and promotion of a culture for learning within the whole school community and the creation of the conditions for optimum learning through the provision of support, adequate facilities and resources, both human and physical (OECD, 2007). Robinson (2010) states that instructional leadership refers to practices related to planning, evaluation, coordination and the improvement of teaching and learning. It focuses 'on teaching and learning and on the behaviour of teachers in working with students' (Bush & Glover, 2003, p. 12). Mitchell & Castle (2005) state that researchers argue that the educational role of the principal is more appropriately configured as the facilitator of processes such as collaborative inquiry, problem-solving and school development. Summarising the research, Murphy (1990) lists four practices that characterise effective instructional leaders. These persons:

- Develop a mission and goals and translate them into professional practice
- Manage the educational production function
- Promote an academic learning climate
- Develop a supportive work environment (p. 169).

Strategies used by school leaders, and considered effective in improving teaching and learning, are professional dialogue, discussion and modelling (Blase & Blase,

1999; Southworth, 2003), as well as monitoring (Southworth, 2003), which are all related to coaching and mentoring, as discussed in the previous section.

DuFour (2002) states that attention has shifted from teaching to learning, and some have proposed the term 'learning leader' over 'instructional leader'. Learning-centred leadership as a concept emphasises learning through teachers and students learning and not a leader's instruction.

Distributed or shared leadership can also contribute to the professional development of teachers, as analysed below. It is concerned with spreading leadership over (Spillane, 2003) onto two or more leaders. Distributed leadership can also be described as shared, collaborative, collegial or participative (Bush, 2003), as well as delegated or democratic (Woods et al., 2004). Reeves (2006) argues that distributed leadership is not just 'an exercise in participatory democracy', nor is it the assurance of followers that they are heard or felt by leaders: 'Distributed leadership is based on trust, as well as the certain knowledge that no single leader possesses the knowledge, skills, and talent to lead an organisation...' (Reeves, 2006, p.28). Trust is again a central issue, as it is the prerequisite for distributing leadership (Reeves, 2006). How can teachers be open to others, cooperate with them or develop networks and partnerships unless they trust them? How can a school community become school-wide and not partial unless members trust each other?

Additionally, shared decision making, a shared mission and vision of the school and a shared sense of responsibility help to ensure ownership of organisational goals, processes and practices among all stakeholders, namely staff and pupils. Bolam et al. (2005) state that leaders need to develop new roles and responsibilities within the school through distributed leadership. Headteachers can also create conditions whereby teachers have time available for collaborating and sharing knowledge, with the ultimate goal of reducing teacher isolation. According to Somech (2005), among the potential benefits of distributed leadership are its contribution to the quality of teachers' work lives and to increased motivation and satisfaction.

Distributed leadership represents an important shift in perspective on leadership by recognising that '... leaders at the organisational apex are not unique sources of change and vision; nor do they act necessarily as simple figures coaxing, persuading, inspiring or directing followers towards the "sunny uplands" of organisational success' (Woods et al., 2004, p.454).

It has been stated that distributed leadership means different things to different people (Spillane et al., 2005). Woods et al. (2004) present a range of meanings, attached to the concept of distributed leadership. However, the following three distinctive elements identified by the authors distil distributed leadership from previous ideas:

- Leadership is a phenomenon which arises from a group or network of interacting individuals and not from the one person. Gronn (2002) used

the terms 'concertive action' to express the '... additional dynamic which is the product of conjoint activity. Where people work together in such a way that they pool their initiative and expertise, the outcome is a product or energy which is greater than the sum of their individual actions' (Woods et al., 2004, p.441)

- Distributed leadership 'suggests openness of the boundaries of leadership' (p.442), meaning that the net of leaders is widened so that individuals and groups can contribute to the leadership process
- Varieties of expertise within the organisation need to be distributed across the many stakeholders and not the few.

Distributed leadership is related to the professional learning community for the following reasons: both phenomena emphasise shared values and visions, a collaborative culture (Bolam et al., 2005) and are based on trust (Reeves, 2006; Bolam et al., 2005). They are both described as phenomena which arise from a group or network of interacting individuals and not from the persons (Woods et al., 2004, Bolam et al., 2005). In addition, every member of the school community should have an opportunity to share what (s)he has learned about their own practice (King, 2002). Finally, distributed leadership is about developing many learning-centred leaders rather than just one at the top (NCSL, 2003). One of the main assumptions of leadership as learning is that it requires the redistribution of power and authority within the school organisation. Leaders need to release authority explicitly, and teachers need to learn to enhance personal and collective

power and informal authority so that shared learning is encouraged (Lambert, 1998b). Thus, opportunities need to be given to everyone to work as a leader and to develop leadership capacities. It has been argued that leaders should be evaluated based on the number of new leaders they develop and not on the number of followers they lead (Wheatley, 1999). Cohen & Tichy (1997) argue that the best way to have more leaders is to have leaders develop leaders. They also add that leaders must be developed at all levels.

Harris et al. (2007) suggest that distributing leadership does not automatically result in organisational improvement; indeed, it depends on the way in which leadership is distributed, how it is distributed and for what purpose. Leithwood et al. (2006) show that some patterns of leadership distribution are productive, while others can be damaging to organisational change. Bush (2008) discusses distributed leadership's potential to impact on schools, but with the involvement of the headteacher in its generation. Nevertheless, there still remains the question of how distributed leadership is put into practice.

Another leadership idea which has associations with fostering teachers' professional development is the transformational approach. Leithwood (1992) and his colleagues found that transformational school leaders are in continuous pursuit of three fundamental goals:

- To help staff members to develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture

- To foster teachers' professional development
- To help them solve problems together more effectively.

Thus, transformational leadership emphasises the relationship between leaders and followers, collaboration and sharing as in distributed leadership.

Burns (1978) suggests that transformational leadership '... occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leader and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality' (p.20). Therefore, emphasis is given to the motivation and collaboration of the leader-follower. Transformational leaders are those who focus on creating change rather than maintaining the system and '... can initiate and cope with change, and they can create something new out of the old' (Horner, 2003, p.36).

Horner also suggests that in this way these leaders personally evolve while also helping their followers and organisation to evolve. In addition, they '... build strong relationships with others while supporting and encouraging each individual's development' (Horner, 2003, p.32), which means that teachers' professional development and development are supported and encouraged by transformational leaders.

Bass & Avolio (1993) developed the following four components of transformational leadership:

- Charismatic leadership or idealised influence, which refers to the charisma of leaders as role models and who are respected and admired by their followers
- Inspirational motivation refers to the extent to which leaders motivate others, generate enthusiasm and inspire and appeal to followers by challenging goals and communicating optimism
- Intellectual stimulation refers to the ability of leaders to inspire themselves and followers to be creative, to challenge their assumptions and to take risks. The term is related to learning leaders
- Individualised consideration refers to the leader's attention to the needs of and the potential for developing followers. They establish a supportive climate where individual differences are respected.

Transformational leadership has several characteristics in common with emotional intelligence (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003). The theory of emotional intelligence is especially helpful for informal relationships and communication within the workplace.

Goleman (1995) relates emotional intelligence to leaders' abilities and defines emotional intelligence as the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and

in our relationships. He emphasises the understanding of emotions and their use as motivation. Five major areas of skills are underlined:

- Knowing one's emotions
- Managing emotions
- Motivating oneself
- Recognising emotions in others
- Handling relationships.

These skills are needed for leader-follower collaboration and motivation, as well as generally in social interactions. Headteachers need to use emotional intelligence skills to monitor their own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate and to guide thinking and actions (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003). Social intelligence and emotional understanding are related to leadership success (Leithwood et al., 2006).

Headteachers also need to possess the skill of empathy, through which they can read each occasion, sense what needs to be done and act accordingly. Empathy is the ability to gain an insight into or recognise the emotions of others (Badea & Pană, 2010; Goleman, 1995). Through empathy, threats to self-esteem can be recognised and limited, so staff can feel safe when facing the unknown or when risk taking, when dealing with 'teaching uncertainty' (concept stated by Rosenholtz,

1989). Lepard and Foster (2003) emphasised the value of empathetic leaders, stating that when trying to 'strengthen leadership behaviour', knowledge and expertise might not be as important as personal qualities and traits such as 'initiative, trustworthiness, self-confidence, and drive for achievement, along with empathy' (p. 3), the ability to leverage diversity and the ability to work effectively in team settings.

According to Mahony (2004), the ability to notice the emotional balance of others is the outside aspect of emotional intelligence. Mandell & Pherwani (2003) suggest that the common characteristics of transformational leadership style and emotional development are the qualities of empathy, motivation, self-awareness, self-confidence, self-control, conviction, tolerance for stress and the abilities to handle conflict and to gain the respect and trust of their employees.

Leadership, professional development and workplace learning

Promoting professional development focused on teaching, learning and leadership is one of the characteristics of outstanding headteachers as school leaders (Matthews, 2009). Bubb & Earley (2009) state that staff development needs to be 'managed and led, and done so effectively, ensuring it has a positive impact' (p.3). As such, school leaders can and should play a critical role in teachers' professional development (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004; Clement & Vandenberght, 2003). Phillips

(2003) states that school leaders must change organisational structures to create new school cultures that foster experimentation, collaboration and continuous improvement in order to implement a new paradigm of professional development among teams of teachers who share responsibility for high levels of learning for all students.

The role of leadership in the creation of a learning school culture is crucial. Stoll (2003) mentions that '... leaders have been described as the culture founders [...] their contribution or responsibility being the change of school culture by the installation of new values and beliefs' (p.105). Culture is also 'seen' in the management of a school's structure, systems and physical environment and the extent to which there is a learning focus on both pupils and adults (Stoll, 2003).

Karagiorgi & Nicolaidou (2009) explored the leadership of continuing professional development in Cypriot schools, in terms of the practices employed by primary school leaders. Leaders in this study acknowledged the 'individualistic' character of professional development and showed minimal concern for continuing professional development management, referring to problems related to a lack of emotional skills in approaching staff development and also the inadequacy of supporting structures in terms of resources. They concluded that leadership practices reflected neither transformational nor transactional approaches.

Lindstrom & Speck (2004) clarify headteachers' roles, stating that leaders must have a clear understanding, the skills and the abilities to 'help lead professional development' (p.5). Eraut et al. (2002) argued that some of the major factors in teachers' learning at work are 'personality, interpersonal skills, knowledge and learning orientation of their manager' (p.107).

The planning and application of plans, progress monitoring and evaluating results are needed (Bubb & Earley, 2010) in order to promote the proper identification of learning opportunities and an analysis of organisational and individual needs. Rosenholtz (1989) found that clear and frequent evaluation by principals, who identify specific improvement needs and monitor the progress teachers make in achieving them, is one of the factors explaining variance in teachers' learning opportunities. The above headteachers' activities are more related to learning-centred leadership (Matthews, 2009; Robinson, 2010), as the emphasis is placed on schools and teachers' development and students' learning.

According to Keep & Rainbird (2002), the role of managers in learning organisations, i.e. headteachers in schools, needs to be changed. In essence, they need to move from their controlling, instructing and directing role to a new role as mentor, coach, facilitator and 'servant of the team'. They also need to be viewed mostly as resource controllers rather than as the main source of wisdom and expertise (Keep & Rainbird, 2002). This idea is linked with Eraut's (2004) emphasis

on the informal role of managers, as he states that this informal role is probably more important than the formal role for learning in the workplace.

Also relevant here is the idea of the headteacher as a lead learner, as discussed by King (2002) and Mahony (2004). Similar concepts are those of the learning leader (Mohr, 1998; DuFour, 2002) and the learning model (Elmore, 2002). Lead learners are active advocates and ongoing supporters of learning and development in the workplace, and they provide support to their colleagues and encourage lifelong learning. The need for the leader to lead by becoming a living example of a commitment to continue collaborative learning is also stressed (Southworth, 2004; Lumby, 1997). Mohr (1998) stated that headteachers must be leaders of learning in their schools and that they cannot teach others how to be learners, if they do not acknowledge their own need for ongoing learning. Lead learners are 'leading by example', 'demonstrating transparent decision making, confidence, optimism, hope, resilience and consistency between words and deeds' (Leithwood et al., 2006). In addition, they model good practice and are recognised by their staff (Matthews, 2009).

The idea of lead learners is connected with professional learning communities and school improvement. Senge et al. (2000) state that the impetus for change often comes firstly from the principal, who becomes, '... a lead teacher and lead learner, and steward of the learning process as a whole' (p.15). The quality of the lead

learner is related to the charisma of leaders as role models, respected and admired by their followers, and thus to charismatic leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Developing and sustaining a culture with learning at its heart is acknowledged to be a major task for educational leaders (Bush & Anderson 2003). Norms of collaboration and collegiality in relation to headteachers' leadership are discussed by theorists such as Rosenholtz (1989) and Drago-Severson & Pinto (2006). For example, Rosenholtz (1989) stated that collaboration is structured by school principals when they offer an open invitation to participate in substantive decision-making and faculty interaction. She found in her study that, in schools where leadership was helpful, every teacher within the school continued to improve their teaching skills, which in turn resulted in a constant improvement throughout the school. She stated that headteachers in these schools often enabled the more successful teachers to collaborate with the less experienced ones, which led to an increase in confidence in the latter. This practice is related to mentoring. Eaker & Gonzalez (2006) also stressed the importance of distributed leadership for successful professional learning communities. Fostering collaboration and distributing leadership are interrelated processes. Furthermore, Reeves (2006) stressed that 'leaders can make decisions with their authority, but they can implement those decisions only through collaboration' (p.52). Thus, one of the main tasks of leaders is to encourage collaboration and collegiality.

Drago-Severson & Pinto (2006) found that there are many ways in which headteachers exercise their leadership to maximise the potential of available resources (human and financial) and to foster the ongoing growth of faculty and staff. They mention that the underlying goal of many of these strategies appears to be the reduction of teacher isolation as a means of improving collegiality, collaboration and adult development. They conclude that the strategies of mentoring, which were discussed earlier, and of placing more adults in the classroom provide opportunities for teacher learning by reducing isolation and creating a more collegial environment. Furthermore, these strategies can contribute to the types of professional development a school may need.

Hord & Hirsh (2009) outlined seven approaches taken by schools principals in order to support strong learning communities. They:

- Reassure teachers that they know they can succeed – together
- Expect teachers to keep knowledge fresh
- Guide communities toward self-governance
- Make data accessible
- Teach discussion and decision-making skills
- Show teachers research
- Take time to build trust.

Thus, professional learning communities are supported when teachers are trusted, encouraged and supported to research and keep knowledge fresh and when they share leadership. Additionally, teaching discussion and decision-making skills should be one of the major concerns of leaders, if they want to support professional learning communities. Learning communities should know different strategies for decision-making, including voting and consensus building (Hord & Hirsh, 2009).

The major question in Cyprus is how headteachers can develop a school culture when they work in a school for only two to six years before being transferred to another school. This presents headteachers with a difficult and challenging task, so this study aims to investigate this as well as other issues stated in the previous section activities that headteacher can undertake in order to facilitate professional development.

Conclusion

Headteachers have an important role in facilitating teachers' access to learning opportunities within their workplace. Eraut (2004) believes that the workplace context is under-researched, but it also offers new perspectives to research on learning, since it encompasses a wide range of '... more or less structured environments, which are only rarely structured with learning in mind' (p.247).

Therefore, I decided to focus my research on the types and the frequency of learning opportunities offered within the workplace and in what ways headteachers can facilitate this access and teachers' professional development.

What can school leaders do to ensure that faculty members, including themselves, continue to grow and learn? Leadership is one of the four key operational processes that create, manage and sustain professional learning communities (Bolam et. al., 2005). The literature review revealed the importance of both formal and informal learning opportunities for teachers' professional development. It highlighted for me particularly the importance of informal learning opportunities taking place within the workplace and the value of generating a collaborative school culture full of mutual trust and respect and where learning can develop and grow. Thus, I decided to examine teachers' access to formal and informal learning opportunities within their workplace, as well as their headteacher's facilitative role.

Professional learning communities is a concept that I have never studied in depth until now, and although it is related to the familiar concept of learning organisation, it has specific characteristics which are crucial for enabling staff to be lifelong learners within their everyday working routine. Additionally, the literature review with the contribution of the viva experience, as well as a long reflective process, altered the focus of my study, so I had abandoned my initial intention to explore the leadership style of schools' headteachers and instead relate it to teachers' learning opportunities within their workplace. The reasons for this

decision were theorists' statements that certain leadership styles can be more effective in certain situations (Bush, 2003; Busher & Barker, 2003; Horner, 2003) and the researcher's subjectivity during the process of categorising headteacher leadership styles, which was considered a significant limitation of that research strategy. Thus, my second objective was transformed and instead focused on how headteachers exercise their leadership role.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research strategy adopted for this study and constitutes a description, an analysis and a rationale. It begins by describing the methodology and four methodological considerations, then research strategies, the issues of validity, generalisability, reliability and data analysis, and finally research limitations.

Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to develop the research design. Before proceeding to do so, however, it is necessary to reiterate my research objectives, which are:

1. To investigate the types of formal and informal learning opportunities teachers have in their workplace, as well as teachers', headteachers' and inspectors' perceptions of and attitudes to such opportunities.
2. To investigate the relationship between how headteachers implement school leadership and how this impacts on teachers' access to learning opportunities.

Ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions underlie the belief system of all involved in the research process, namely the researcher and research participants. Ontology deals with questions concerning what reality is like and the

basic elements it contains (Silverman, 2005). My ontological position is that leadership is an action experienced participatively in which both the leader and the led interact with each other and leadership is framed by what they know and believe. Participants experience the leadership actions and these actions offer learning opportunities; the actions and the learning opportunities will be interpreted by participants within the school workplace.

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and status of knowledge (Silverman, 2005); the way that the researcher conceives of knowledge shapes his or her research. My epistemological position is that the phenomenon of leadership can be described by all persons involved in it. Thus knowledge is acquired by participation. Headteachers perform specific actions and teachers experience them. They can all describe, interpret and analyse their experiences from their own perspective Each participant – here, headteachers and inspectors – may view the experience (here, the leadership actions) differently. Their experiences, background attitudes and behaviours are diverse and thus each of them might express something different as each person interprets and makes sense of his/her world in varied ways.

I believe that I need to employ different ways of investigating participants' perceptions; behaviours and attitudes and grasp how they perceive their everyday experiences within their school. I need to understand the subjective experiences of those being studied, how they think and feel and how they act or react in their

working environment. Thus, I place my research within the interpretivism paradigm. Cohen and Manion (1994) state that the interpretive paradigm is characterised by a concern for the individual and the central endeavour is to understand the subjective world of human experience.

I focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations, so I adopt the interpretive paradigm because I want to understand how the above experiences are perceived by teachers, headteachers and inspectors. Working in the interpretivism paradigm means that more open and in-depth perspectives of the issue are accessed. The 'perspective', the 'point of view' and the 'lived experience' of organisational members (Silverman, 2005) are needed in order to understand how stakeholders interpret the experience of accessing learning opportunities in relation to headteacher leadership. Interviews with inspectors and headteachers, as well as focus group interviews with teachers, were considered the best methods for eliciting the data needed to address my research questions. These are qualitative research strategies.

Qualitative research enables the researcher to investigate in detail a problem, dilemma, phenomenon or case 'in an open-ended way, without prior expectation' and to develop 'theoretical explanations that are based on their interpretations of what they observe' (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p.388). Additionally, these methods allow researchers to deal with unanticipated factors or issues and to provide organisational stakeholders with information that they do not expect to be

relevant (Miller et al., 2004; Silverman, 2005). However, they need to be open and flexible in order to respond to unanticipated opportunities.

I also used a range of quantitative strategies for the collection of data, besides qualitative, to gain the potential for substantial strengths that the component approaches cannot achieve when used singly (Drew et al., 2008). I employed questionnaires and learning diaries. The first research question, which refers to the types of formal and informal learning opportunities, can be best investigated with quantitative methods, using research tools such as questionnaires and diaries. Using a questionnaire addressed to all teachers from the three schools had the potential to gain information from large groups in each school (Robson, 1993; Cohen et al., 2000), and in my case from all teachers. One of my first thoughts was to use school documents to add richness to my data. There were no official records in any of the Cypriot schools stating which formal opportunities are offered to teachers, so two other possibilities that I investigated were:

- The development plans for each school. Headteachers from my sample's schools did not have a written report of their school plan. Two schools' headteachers said that they discussed their schools' aims and objectives, partially, during several staff meetings.
- To examine and analyse the content of the minutes of teachers' weekly meetings. Minutes were the only written documents that might include most of the formal learning opportunities within schools. Data collected

could be cross-referenced with headteacher interviews. After reflection I decided not to follow up on this idea for the following reasons.

All the data provided through this content analysis could be acquired from teachers' questionnaires and headteacher interviews. In fact, minutes may provide only a partial account of what happens, since they are summarised, filtered and incomplete records of what has been said. In all three schools, there was a different person writing the minutes every three/four meetings, so even in the same school there would not be a consistent system of recording these learning opportunities. Additionally, since minutes may not be detailed, it is possible that in some schools there would be no mention of all the learning opportunities for teachers, especially in the case of external activities. Finally, the learning opportunities included may provide mainly the headteacher's viewpoint and the official statement, and therefore they may be regarded as biased.

Using elements from both qualitative and quantitative research is a mixed methods approach (Cohen et al., 2000). Mixed methods permit the mixing and matching of design components, which in turn offers the best chance of answering specific research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Furthermore, these approaches can provide fuller, deeper and more meaningful answers to a single question and stronger evidence for a conclusion through the convergence or corroboration of findings, known in the literature as 'triangulation' (Johnson &

Christensen, 2008). Although there is a debate about the incompatibility of qualitative-quantitative methods in educational research, I adopt Howe's (1988) thesis that 'no incompatibility between quantitative and qualitative methods exists at either the level of practice or that of epistemology' (p.10).

In summary, the methods for gathering data, in their chronological order, were:

- Interviews with inspectors
- Interviews with headteachers
- Teacher questionnaires addressed to all teachers from the three schools
- Teacher completion of learning diaries with a list
- Focus group interviews.

I was interested in how headteachers believed they exercised their leading duties and how teachers experienced them, in relation to accessing learning opportunities within their workplace. Therefore, collecting data from teachers and headteachers was considered important. Additionally, I gathered information from schools' inspectors so that I could have more data to compare, contrast and interpret.

Inspectors carry out the policies of the Ministry of Education and are considered co-responsible with headteachers for their implementation. According to the

current educational Law in Cyprus, Inspectors of Primary Education have three main duties:

- To advise teachers
- To help them develop professionally
- To assess them (Cyprus Republic, 2008, Law K.Δ.Π. 223/76 N.223).

Inspectors' multiple and conflicting roles of being required to both develop and assess teachers is an issue long discussed in Cyprus, and it has been suggested that there is a need for change (Pashiardis, 2004; Moec, 2007). Nevertheless, educational reform is still in progress and, considering political and economic facts, the present law for inspectors is expected to remain in force for the next few years at least. My main aim was to find out inspectors' perceptions concerning headteachers and their role in facilitating teacher access to learning opportunities, since the law charges them with the duty of helping teachers to develop professionally.

In the next section I will discuss four of my methodological concerns and analyse my final decisions. The first concern relates to my sample selection. The second concerns the issue of being an insider in the research and the third the issue of why observation is not included in my research methods. The last concern is related to ethical issues and anticipated problems.

Sample selection

A sample selection is related to populations or phenomena relevant to the research focus. I used a purposeful sampling strategy (Silverman, 2005), which allows one to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested.

My sample included the headteachers (N=3), inspectors (N=2) and all full-time teachers (N=47) of the three primary schools. My decision to focus my research on three schools was based mainly on the expectation of gaining a deeper understanding of the leadership process. Focusing on a single school was not an appropriate approach for my research questions, since it is an issue whereby comparisons between different cases can elicit useful information. On the other hand, including more than three schools could prevent in-depth analysis, as more details would be needed to describe each case.

My criteria for selecting the schools were their size, the area where they were situated and the need for at least two different inspectors. It was difficult to find three different inspectors for schools within the same location. A number of schools met the above criteria and decisions on how to choose the schools had to be made. On reflection I chose three medium-sized schools, located near to the area I

lived and worked in, so that I would have easy access. Consequently, they were part of a 'convenience sample' (Jonson and Christensen, 2008).

The three schools are of similar size in terms of the number of teachers working, with each school employing 14-17 teachers on the staff (medium-sized schools). A very small or very large number of teachers may force headteachers to organise learning opportunities within schools in different ways. Moreover, in very small schools there may be fewer opportunities than in larger schools. Additionally, the three schools are in the same central area and are 10-15 minutes away from the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, where most professional development programmes are offered. Teachers' formal learning opportunities out of school are not affected by distance. A brief description of the three schools participating in the research is given below.

Shrike school

Shrike School employs 16 teachers and assistant headteachers. Mary is the headteacher of Shrike and was recently promoted to the post. Although she has many years' teaching experience and is older than the other two headteachers in the sample, she has fewer years' experience as a headteacher. Most of the Shrike teachers have been working there for several years.

Five female teachers, with 9 to 23 years of teaching experience, kept a learning diary in Shrike. This group of teachers completed the diary in detail, explaining every formal and informal learning opportunity. The teachers completed the diaries in great detail, for which there may be main two reasons:

- I knew every teacher in the group prior to starting my research, which may have influenced them to complete it more accurately. It must be stressed here that in the other two schools I knew only about half the teachers personally.
- The person who undertook the role of coordinating the other four teachers in completing diaries, as was evident from the focus group interview, kept reminding her colleagues to be thorough in the activity.

Gardenia

Gardenia School includes 17 teachers and assistant headteachers. Athena is the Gardenia headteacher, and at the time of the research she was in her third year as a headteacher and in her first year at Gardenia. She lived in the community where the school is located, as did most of the teachers working there. Many of the parents and children at the school were related to the headteacher and they had close bonds. Five female teachers with 10 to 23 years' teaching experience volunteered to keep the learning diary at Gardenia.

Nectarine

Nectarine is a new school operating since 2006 and has 14 teachers and assistant headteachers as teaching staff. Dora was the Nectarine headteacher and she had been working as a headteacher for five years. She lived in the community where her school was located.

Three female Nectarine teachers volunteered to keep a learning diary. One of them had 12 years' teaching experience and the other two were assistant headteachers, both with 23 years' experience. They submitted the three diaries, but one of them had only been filled in for the first two weeks. In the focus group interview the teacher admitted that she had been absent from school during the third week, and then the fourth week she had forgotten to keep filling in the diary. It was decided that the half-filled diary should be totally ignored, so findings from just two diaries will be presented for this establishment.

Questionnaires were given to all members of the teaching staff in each school, and all the teachers in each school who volunteered to keep a learning diary were invited to a focus group interview. More details are given in a later section.

The 'insider' researcher

There are both advantages and disadvantages in undertaking research in a small country like Cyprus, where the researcher and the respondents may know each

other and may even be colleagues. Being familiar with the local culture and having already established a relationship provide the opportunity for the researcher to gain participants easily and perhaps be privy to 'insider' information (Robson, 1993; Le Gallais, 2003; Rooney, 2005a) that would not be trusted to a stranger. Additionally, involvement as an 'insider' has the potential of increasing validity due to the added richness, honesty, reliability and authenticity of information acquired (Rooney, 2005a). I believe that researching in familiar settings gave me the opportunity to gauge the honesty and accuracy of responses and to enhance rapport and communication through informal interaction with the participants. Thus, they were more likely to reveal more intimate details of their school culture, which is not an easy area to investigate.

On the other hand, the issue of the 'insider' can be seen from a different perspective. With 'insider' research, the concept of validity can be viewed as increasingly problematic because of the researcher's involvement with the subjects (Rooney, 2005b). Hammersley stated that '... when a setting is familiar the danger of misunderstanding is especially great' (1990, p.8), i.e. prior knowledge, underlying personal bias and preconceived ideas, can threaten the validity of the research.

Bias arises when researchers allow their own values and expectations to colour the conduct of their research. Dictionary definitions of 'bias' generally focus on the notion of the distortion of judgment, a prejudiced outlook or the consideration of a

question (Dictionary.com) and an unfair act, policy (The Free Dictionary) or influence. One source of bias threatening research at different stages of the inquiry occurs when information possessed by the research participant is distorted, willingly or unwillingly. Triangulating data collected from different participants is one way to counteract information distortion. Additionally, as mentioned by Burgess et al. (2006), when researchers are clear and concise about the way they analyse their data, they also help to eliminate the problem of bias in their data.

Related to 'insider' researcher is also the issue of the power relationship between a researcher and his or her participants. Floyd & Arthur (2010) mention that when they undertook interpretive insider research within their own institution they had contrasting experiences as insiders in relation to the revealing or concealing of information. They disagreed with the view that power relations are an issue only if the researcher is in a more senior position than the participant. On the contrary, they stressed that power relations are more complex for the insider and that the respective positions in the hierarchy of researcher and participant are likely to influence the research, irrespective of which actor is more senior.

In my case I would characterise myself as a 'partial' insider, since none of the three schools was my own institution. However, I knew some of the teachers in the first two schools and more teachers who worked in the third school (Shrike), where I had previously worked. Relations with teachers participating in my research were not very close, as I knew them as former colleagues or through

some cultural groups or parents' associations. Nevertheless there was the possibility that we might work with each other in the future, and we all knew that.

I believe that, when I interviewed teachers in the focus groups, I had certain advantages as a research insider, resulting in added richness of data, honesty and authenticity of information. Conversely, I felt that power relations had a negative impact when interviewing my superiors, namely the two inspectors. I believe that they were very careful when they were questioned on issues which might be considered sensitive or official, or where it could be argued that it was unethical that I knew these issues as a teacher. For instance, when they were asked how headteachers usually react when they are asked to send teachers to gain new learning and to give examples of headteacher

Headteachers who encourage teachers to attend to formal learning opportunities, they were reluctant to give their views. Their words, pauses in conversation, taking time to prepare their answers and their facial expressions showed that they may be concealing information. However, this may be related not only to power relations but also to ethical dilemmas, since they may have wanted to protect other colleagues and not reveal personal information.

Before undertaking the inspector interviews, I believed they would provide me with the first data for the schools I wanted to study. However, when I interviewed both inspectors, I realised that the conversation could only cover surface issues, without

a focus on the three specific schools. The inspectors avoided giving detailed information on how the leadership of each of the three schools had an impact on teachers' access to learning opportunities. Thus, the data collected were useful, but only to a limited extent. Nevertheless, they were still useful for me because they helped me prepare the next steps of my research and my remaining research tools, since they were the first two interviews I conducted.

Why not include observation?

A reasonable question may be to ask why I did not include observation of the three headteachers as a method of collecting my data. Observation might be considered fundamental to understanding each school culture (Silverman, 2005), other workplace characteristics and headteachers' leadership, but there are several reasons for not choosing this particular technique.

Firstly, one of my main aims was to understand how headteachers and teachers perceive their headteachers' leadership skills, which could be better obtained from interviews, since an interpretation of participants' experiences as they perceived them was required. Secondly, it is a time-consuming technique and, being a teacher myself working during school hours, it would have been very difficult to leave my duties in order to collect my research data through observation. Thirdly, observation has certain disadvantages that I wanted to avoid. The risk of the observer affecting the situation under observation (Robson, 1993) was a very real one, since headteachers could, during observation, exercise their leadership in a

different way and not necessarily as they usually do in their everyday school lives. This was also a risk in the case of the headteacher interviews, but it could be limited by triangulating data from their interviews with data from teachers' questionnaires and the focus group interviews. Nevertheless, I believe that my data collection is sufficient in both answering my research questions and corresponding to the interpretivism perspective upon which I was focusing.

Ethical issues and anticipated problems

Ethical issues may arise before, during and after the research, so they were considered at every stage of the study: research design, empirical phases, data analysis and the final reporting of data.

The treatment of research participants is considered 'the most important and fundamental issue that researchers must confront' (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p.105). Researchers may face a dilemma when dealing with the need to strike a balance between the demands placed on them as professionals in pursuit the truth and the rights of their participants (Cohen et al., 2000). Every researcher has a responsibility to protect the participants in an investigation by obtaining informed consent, by ensuring protection from harm and by protecting privacy (Drew et al., 2008). Further details relating to the issues of how participants were treated in my research will be discussed below.

Informed consent

It is essential to obtain the informed consent (Cohen et al., 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2008) of all participants who are to take part in a research study. Therefore, I informed the participants of my research purposes and procedures before they agreed to take part. Moreover, I made a point of ensuring that they had a complete understanding of the purpose and the methods to be used in the study, as well as the demands placed on them as participants, especially when keeping a diary. This was accomplished firstly through the introductory letter sent to headteachers before they agreed to participate in my research and, secondly, through an introductory session in each of the three schools, during which I presented all the relevant information, since deception, even unintentional, is unacceptable (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Robson, 1993). The right to refuse to be involved or to withdraw from the research at any time was also made clear to every participant.

The willingness and ability of individuals to respond accurately, or even at all, is a common limitation in research (Cohen et al., 2000). During the informal introductory session I also discussed with teachers alternative procedures which might be more convenient for them (Cohen et al., 2000), such as whether they preferred to complete the questionnaire session then or later, how some of them would be volunteers in the keeping of a diary, who to inform, how they were to be reminded to keep it and so on. During that meeting, I distributed questionnaires

and a notice asking for volunteers to keep learning diaries. Respecting their right to freedom and self-determination, I asked them to help me as a researcher for our mutual professional development.

Ensuring protection from harm

Johnson & Christensen (2008) maintained that 'educational research has historically engaged in research that imposes either minimal or no risk to the participants' (p118). Compared to medical studies this might be true, but we should always consider potential harm to participants and possible sources of tension. In my case, the audiotaping process during interviews, which resulted in permanent records, could pose a threat to confidentiality and anonymity. Therefore, after transcribing the interviews and replacing names with pseudonyms I destroyed the audio tapes.

Another type of harm is the risk of wasting participants' time due to poor research design, which could lead to them refusing to contribute to future research and '... damage future enquiries of other researchers' (Burgess et al., 2006, p.34). The researcher also has the obligation not to intrude into participants' lives by asking questions which might cause distress, offence or inconvenience. I tried to avoid both issues, and believe I succeeded by careful consideration of the design and preparation of each research tool before using them.

Protecting privacy

Respect for people is related to the right for personal data protection, for privacy and anonymity, although maintaining this privacy can be difficult at times (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). For the protection of participants, pseudonyms were used. For the purposes of this study, I incorporated a coding system (Table 3.1) to allow for the identification and the source of the data illustrated within the chapters presenting, analysing and discussing the findings.

Table 3.1: Pseudonyms and schools’ names

False school name	Headteachers’ pseudonyms	Teachers’ pseudonyms	Inspectors’ Pseudonyms
Gardenia	Athena	Zoi Lora Rea Maria	Lefki
Shrike	Mary	Sonia Rania Leoni Olga Noni	Ino
Nectarine	Dora	Neli Anthi Panagiota	Ino

Confidentiality is a way of protecting a participant’s right to privacy (Cohen et al., 2000). It refers to an agreement with the researchers about what may be done with the information obtained about a participant (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), meaning that although researchers know who has provided the information, they will not reveal that person’s identity. The teachers in this research were not

promised confidentiality, since it cannot be fully guaranteed in my case. The fact that their answers would not be absolutely confidential might have forced some of them not to present their true feelings, opinions and perceptions, although this will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five in relation to their reactions when expressing themselves in interviews or focus group interviews.

In a small place like Cyprus the issue of safeguarding anonymity is problematic. Cohen et al. (2000) mention that 'a subject agreeing to a face-to-face interview, [...] can in no way expect anonymity' (p.61). In the present case, inspectors might recognise their schools and headteachers might recognise their staff. Although they were not informed of the names of the other schools involved in the research, it is possible that the participants may recognise each other. No one can deny that the participants were aware of this issue when giving information, which ultimately may have influenced research validity. Nevertheless, I believe this possibility is very small, especially considering the research had taken place more than three years before and that none of the inspectors or headteachers of my sample works in her post any longer. Additionally, all the participants were aware of this issue before they volunteered, as it was mentioned during the introductory session. They were satisfied with my promise not to reveal their names and to use pseudonyms. They were asked, before being interviewed, whether they minded their answers being audiotaped and quoted in the research, and all agreed that this would not be a problem. It could be claimed that the accidental revelation of a participant's

identity in the educational system of Cyprus, where almost all teachers have a lifelong working contract, may not be seen as a serious threat.

Another ethical issue, when interviewing, is the development of a close relationship and rapport with participants in order to gain their trust and honest information. This was easier in my case, since I was an insider and had positive previous relationships with some of the participants. Referring to interviews, Miller & Glassner (2004) stated that rapport involves more than the provision of confidentiality and non-judgmental responses.

In order to build trust and establish familiarity before the interviews, I had two telephone conversations and one personal contact with each headteacher, as well as an informal session before interviewing the participants. For two of the schools there was an additional third visit, during which I interviewed the school's headteacher. On each visit I communicated with teachers and interacted with them on an informal level.

Another ethical issue is related specifically to the focus group interview methodology, in that there is always a possibility that group members will conspire to silence, intimidate or harass a participant, or even the researcher (Wilkinson, 2004). Moreover, participants can also collude on their responses, so the moderator needs to be prepared to deal with such situations. Wilkinson (2004) states that the moderator needs to establish rapport within the focus group, to use

prompts and probes effectively and to be sensitive to non-verbal cues. Based on this premise, whenever a participant was silent and her body language and facial expression indicated disagreement or that she was thinking of what we were discussing, I would speak to her. My question was open-ended in an attempt to encourage her to express possible disagreement. Establishing trust and the building of rapport are ways of overcoming communication obstacles (Miller& Glassner, 2004) in any kind of interaction. In my specific case I also had to consider the fact that members of each focus group interview all knew each other and that some may have had ties beyond their school relationship. Thus, the formulation of focus group interview questions had to be carefully prepared and the focus group interviews conducted in such a way that those relationships were not affected and at the same time my research objectives were achieved.

Having located the research within the general framework of interpretivism, and explained my decisions on my choice of methodology, this discussion will now consider the specific research strategies and methods employed. I will first present the timetable of my research activities and then discuss the use of individual interviews and focus group interviews, before addressing the use of learning diaries and questionnaires.

Procedures: time scale

Table 3.2 shows the timetable of activities and methods of data collection for my study.

Table 3.2: Time scale for data collection

Time	Activity
November 2007	Getting final approval from the Ministry of Education
September 2008	Sending informative letters ¹ to my sample headteachers
October 2008	Getting final approval from headteachers
October 2008	Sending informative letters to inspectors
November 2008	Interviews with inspectors ²
December 2008	Interviews with school headteachers ³
January 2009	Teacher questionnaire ⁴ distribution and collection. Asking volunteers to fill in the diaries.
Jan. - Feb. 2009	Thirteen teachers are keeping learning diaries ⁵
June 2009	Teacher focus group interviews ⁶

Research strategies

Interviews

The main tool chosen for gathering my data was interviews, based on Eraut’s (2004) suggestions. After reviewing some of the research methods used in this type of research, he suggested that interview studies are the most commonly

¹ Appendix 2 - Translated version of the letter addressed to headteachers

² Appendix 3 - Inspector interview schedule

³ Appendix 4 - Headteacher interview schedule

⁴ Appendix 5 - Teachers’ questionnaire

⁵ Appendix 6 - Learning diary

⁶ Appendix 7 - Focus group interview schedule

employed. In my research, interviews served the three purposes suggested by Cohen & Manion (1994), namely as the principal means of gathering information, functioning as an explanatory device and combining with other methods.

Interviews are considered a special form of conversation which can generate empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). It has an interactional nature, as indicated by the definition given by Miller & Glassner (2004): 'An interview is an interaction between the interviewer and interview subject in which both participants create and construct narrative versions of the social world' (p.125). Since both interviewer and interviewee jointly create and construct 'narrative versions of the social world', the process of interviewing is better described as data 'making' or data 'generation' and not as data 'collection' (Baker, 2004). Baker (2004) adds that the interactional character of the interview allows '... members to draw on their cultural knowledge, including their knowledge about how members of categories routinely speak' (p.163).

The interactional nature of interviews implies that they can facilitate more probing investigation than can be undertaken with a questionnaire. Additionally, the idea of constant interaction contradicts the view that the interviewees are 'passive' (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). For instance, how can they be passive, since they are kept engaged in the 'learning process' of the interview? An interview is a process where interviewees '... could learn more about themselves in both the process and

the content of the interview, as indeed could the interviewer' (Holland & Ramazanoglu, 1994, p.135), but this depends on how the interview is conducted.

Holstein & Gubrium (2004) emphasise the opportunities that participants and researchers have to probe and prompt in order to check their own understanding. They also insert the element of 'active interview participant', which implies that the high subjectivity of the technique can be discounted. Nevertheless, the researcher is the one who eventually extracts the meaning and has control of what is used (Holland & Ramazanoglou, 1994; Cohen & Manion, 1994), so participants must feel as comfortable as possible and the researcher must respect them accordingly.

During interview process I had the opportunity to gain some knowledge of the social context in which the participants work and to see the world through their eyes. Although the time I stayed in each school was very limited, I felt that, as Miller & Glassner (2004) and Silverman (2005) state, I entered into each school's culture and learned how participants interpret situations and facts. The way the interview participants expressed themselves, and their use of language, allowed me to reflect not only on what was heard but also on what was implied and suggested. However, this is where there is a danger of subjectivity. Holland & Ramazanoglu (1994) state that the process of interview interpretation is '... both positive and creative, but also flawed in the sense that we can never be sure that we have got it right' (p.145). Therefore, I tried to be open to all ideas and eliminate my subjectivity, especially concerning interview analysis. It is not an easy

task, and Holland & Ramazanoglu (1994), when referring to the difficulties of interviewing on sensitive subjects, stated that researchers need '... to be continuously aware of how problematic interpretation is and will remain' (p.143).

I felt that the participants were conducting the interview, and at the same time adjusting what they said, according to the body language and questions of the researcher and vice versa. I knew that what they say might be different if they were interviewed on a different day or by a different person, but it is a reciprocal process, which may affect the validity of research. Nevertheless, I believe that we all (interviewer and interviewees) felt that we had the opportunity to make judgments about what we hear and say, what to probe further and how to proceed. Holstein & Gubrium, (2004) characterise interviews as an 'interpersonal drama with a developing plot', since participants are constantly engaged in the work of meaning-making.

The interviews were used to explore headteacher and inspectors' perceptions and attitudes, as well as the experiences of teachers in accessing learning opportunities within the workplace. I had prepared a general structure by deciding in advance what ground was to be covered and what main questions should be asked (Drever, 2003) in the interviews: 'A semi-structured interview schedule tends to be one of the most favoured by educational researchers as it allows respondents to express themselves at some length, but offers enough shape to prevent aimless rambling' (Wragg, 1994, p.272).

Preparing the interview schedules (Appendices 3, 4) was a long process of reflection, writing and rewriting. There were two interview structures – those addressed to headteachers and those addressed to inspectors. Both types of interview covered the topic of formal and informal opportunities, but the main difference between the two types of interview was that those intended for the headteachers focused on their role in promoting the access of teachers to learning opportunities, whereas the inspectors were encouraged to analyse both their own and their headteachers' roles.

Interviews with the two inspectors responsible for the three schools were arranged during November 2008 (Table 3.2), which is a time when inspectors do not usually have a heavy workload. The interviews took place in the inspectors' offices at a time that was convenient for them.

Interviews with the three headteachers were arranged for December 2008, after the interviews with the inspectors, and were conducted in a mutually agreed location, with two being carried out in the headteachers' offices and the third during the Christmas vacation at the headteacher's house. According to Lichtman (2006), it is preferable to conduct interviews in natural settings when talking to people. In the first two cases, I felt that I was more in control of the conduct of the interview, since I also had the opportunity to observe teachers' relationships

and behaviour within their working environment and to observe some characteristics of their school culture. Holland & Ramazanoglou (1994) state that '... the researcher has the power to define the research situation and to reconstitute the content of the interview, the statements of the researched, in her own terms' (p.136). Nevertheless, although a private room was used, there were some breaks that interrupted the flow of the interview, whereas there were no interruptions during the third interview in the third headteacher's house, where time was not limited. Additionally, I had the opportunity to visit the third school on three other occasions during the same academic year.

All interviews were audio-recorded and I paid particular attention to what was being said to understand the issues which arose, and to clarify and probe whenever needed. Shortly afterwards, handwritten field notes of the interviewees' reactions and body expressions were made. Interviewing is a live process and, in my experience, it cannot follow a fixed structure, especially if one wants to start an exchange by building a rapport and establishing trust and familiarity. I did not follow the same order of questions or identical expressions in all interviews, and I tried to make the interviewees feel that they were just talking with a colleague, thus enabling them to feel sufficiently at ease during the interaction to label particular topics irrelevant or to point out misinterpretations and offer corrections (Miller & Glassner, 2004). I felt that it was an ethical obligation I had to all participants, although there were times when I sensed that they felt what Cohen & Manion (1994) and also Holland & Ramazanoglou (1994) mention, that an

interview is a one-sided conversation because no matter how friendly the researcher is, at the end of the interview (s)he will have the recordings and use them.

I constantly tried to remain objective, and I believe that the fact that I conducted all the interviews while simultaneously observing the gestures and facial expressions of respondents contributed to objectivity. I constantly observed whether any vocal nuances or non-verbal language supported what they were saying and constantly reminded myself that I was engaged in this study as a researcher and that I needed to reflect on the new information acquired.

Focus group interviews

According to Johnson & Christensen (2008), the focus group interview is a type of group interview in which a moderator leads a discussion with a group of individuals to examine in detail how the group members think and feel about a topic. The main aim of the moderator is to keep the individuals in the group focused on the topic being discussed. Thus, when conducting focus group interviews, I did not direct questions to each participant in turn; rather, I facilitated group discussion, actively encouraging group members to interact with each other (Wilkinson, 2004). I also used Law's suggestion, cited in Bell (2005), and made periodic checks by asking whether anybody had a different view or wanted to add something. It may often happen that the loud voices of some participants may discourage other participants who are less eager to express themselves (Bers, 1994) or do not feel

that it is necessary or just want the interview to end sooner. I did my best to involve all members of the group (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) by watching for non-verbal cues from those who showed signs of frustration or boredom; consequently, I became more of a moderator and facilitator and less of an interviewer (Bell, 2005).

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages in using focus group interviews compared to individual, in-depth interviews. Wilkinson (2004) states that focus group interviews are more 'naturalistic' than interviews, in that they typically include a range of communicative processes such as arguing, joking, boasting, teasing and persuasion. Therefore, making participants feel that they are participating in a normal conversation can encourage them to express themselves more freely, as in individual interviews.

The strong possibility that focus group participants will not always agree enhances the potential for them 'to misunderstand one another, to question one another, to try to persuade each other of the justice of their point of view', as mentioned by Kitzinger, cited in Wilkinson (2004). Challenges like these, according to Wilkinson, force people to defend or justify their actions or beliefs and often generate detailed accounts.

Focus group interviews are considered very useful for providing in-depth information in a relatively short period of time, and the results are usually easy to

understand (Bell, 2005; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In this study such in-depth information may relate to what teachers think of the learning opportunities available in their school and how they describe their headteacher's leadership. Additionally, focus group interviews are less time-consuming and can allow the researcher to collect a lot of data in a relatively short time period. However, generalisations from focus group interviews are not advisable, 'because the sample size typically is too small and the participants are usually not randomly selected from any known population' (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p.210).

There were instances during the focus group interviews where I felt that I had less control of the process, which might have enabled the participants to follow their own agendas. This might be considered a possible disadvantage of focus group interviews (Wilkinson, 2004), but it should be noted that, at the same time, it enabled me to pay attention to previously neglected or unnoticed phenomena – 'serendipity', according to Bers (1994), or 'unexpected insights', according to Wilkinson (2004). Thus, I was usually able to collect data related to each school culture in a natural way, although I always needed to make sure my agenda was covered.

I was disappointed when transcribing the audiotapes and realised that there were cases when I had to probe and narrow the discussion to elaborate on specific topics, as well as instances when I should have introduced new issues to expand

the discussion but had omitted to do so. One reason might be that I did not pilot focus group interview in the same way that I did for the interviews.

The focus group interviews methodology was used to interview the teachers, who had kept learning diaries a few months earlier, and to discuss aspects mostly related to the diary information and the role of their headteachers in promoting their access to learning opportunities. Twelve out of the thirteen teachers, all female, who kept diaries, accepted the invitation. Three focus group interviews, one in each school, were conducted in an isolated room in each establishment during the final week of the school year. Pupils were not in school at that time. The first focus group interview, in Gardenia, included four participants and lasted about sixty minutes. One teacher, although willing to be interviewed, could not be present in the group meeting at the specified time. At the Shrike, the second focus group interview was conducted with five participants and lasted over an hour and a half. The third focus group interview involved three participants and lasted about an hour and twenty minutes.

The fact that all teachers in each group discussion were from the same school, had been working together daily for more than a year, and that some of them were close friends, lived in the same village or had close social ties (e.g. went out together, had children in the same school, participated in the same out of school activities), means that they may have been aware of each other's views. This may have even contributed to an already established rapport among group members,

which helped the moderator's initial task to build rapport. Nevertheless, their close ties could also be a disadvantage, since a participant might not be open and absolutely honest in the group in which (s)he is or (s)he might express only what (s)he believes the other participants would like to hear. This could contaminate the data because participants may wish to avoid disagreeing with each other, so they were asked whether any of them would like to say anything more, but not the presence of the others. They were given my phone number and e-mail in case they wanted to communicate with me again. However, none of them took up this offer.

During the focus group interviews, they were also asked to identify themselves each time they spoke, and I made a note of who was speaking and the number of the audiotape machine counter so that transcription would be easier. Sometimes it caused an interruption in the flow of the discussion, so I stopped taking notes towards the end of each focus group interview. Fortunately, the participants' voices had become familiar by then, so I had no problem identifying them in the transcription, which took place in the first week following the interviews.

Teachers' learning diaries

Learning opportunities are integral parts of teachers' daily lives. It would have been difficult for anyone to recall accurately after a period of time when, what and where learning occurred, especially when part of a routine. Thus, I decided to use the self-completion learning diaries for a sample of teachers in each school to help

them organise the learning opportunities they experienced during a month and to discuss them at a later stage within the framework of a group interview. It is argued that diaries are a valid method of gathering data concerning events that are difficult to recall accurately (Corti, 1993; Bell, 2005).

Learning diaries were designed to record when, and what, learning opportunities the teachers experienced over a period of four weeks (from 19/1/2009 to 13/2/2009). One of my first concerns was whether to use an open format, therefore allowing respondents to record their learning opportunities in their own words, or whether to use a more structured format, where a list of learning opportunities is pre-categorised (Corti, 1993). It was decided to attempt to integrate both of these formats by pre-coding a list of learning opportunities and by also providing a space for respondents to comment on these activities and to add anything new, if they felt it necessary (Appendix 6). This would ultimately help them to recall their learning opportunities and would require less time to complete their learning diary.

The diary volunteers expressed to their school coordinator their willingness to fill in the diaries. I expected that about three teachers from each school would volunteer, so I prepared five sets of diaries for each school and gave them to a teacher I nominated as coordinator. Coordinators from two of the schools told me that there were more than five volunteers and they had given the diaries to the first five teachers who volunteered. The third school had three volunteers. All

thirteen volunteers were female class teachers, teaching all subjects. Male teachers did not volunteer to participate, although the inclusion of their experiences concerning learning opportunities would have been valuable.

The preparation of the teachers who volunteered was an important issue, since, as Johnson (1990) states, '... reliability of [diary] data can be very high or very low, depending entirely on how well prepared the informants are, and how committed to the research goals they are' (para 1, Informants' diaries section). Teachers were told that they should mention the learning opportunities that occurred during the week and make comments where they thought relevant.

I delivered and collected in person the learning diaries to the respondents participating in the process 'in order to obtain a satisfactory response rate' (Grosbie, 2006). I even tried to maintain contact with the respondents by sending them SMS reminders on their phones or keeping in telephone contact with one teacher in each school once a week and asking her to remind the rest of her colleagues in her school. Although I had 100% return rate, I used only twelve of the thirteen diaries, since, as previously mentioned, one of the Nectarine diaries was not properly filled in due to the teacher's absence from school.

Bell (2005) states that completing diary forms can be time-consuming and irritating for a busy person, so some participants will probably not complete them thoroughly, if at all. In my case, the diaries did not ask for information directly

connected with values, beliefs and feelings, which was one of the reasons for the high return rate. Nevertheless, the main reason was that they had volunteered to undertake this activity. Bell (2005) adds that 'Reluctant diarists will rarely provide usable data, so preliminary consultation is of the utmost importance' (p.174).

The fact that teachers were voluntarily involved in the task of keeping a diary, and that they are mature and well-educated individuals, may have contributed to regular and careful completion of the journals. The teachers also probably wanted to help out a colleague. Keeping the diary took less than five minutes a day, as teachers said during the focus group interviews, so this also may have contributed to the high return rate.

Questionnaires for teachers

A questionnaire is very efficient in terms of the researcher's time and effort because it 'provides the easiest known way of assembling a mass of information' (Robson, 1993). On the other hand, it usually needs more time to prepare and very often has a low rate of return (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Robson, 1993). Despite being addressed to educated people, the questionnaires could not be too complex or demanding, or use literary terminology that might discourage respondents from answering. Hence, the formulation of questions needed careful consideration because questionnaire completion implies that respondents understand and are willing to give the information asked.

The questionnaire (Appendix 5) was aimed at collecting data from teachers and assistant headteachers concerning the types of formal and informal learning opportunities they had in their workplace, as well as existing working conditions in their school at structural and cultural levels. The first two parts of the questionnaire included questions requiring responses with rating scales, which are very useful in building in a 'degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response whilst still generating numbers' (Cohen et al., 2000, p.253). Rating scales are 'particularly useful for tapping attitudes, perceptions and opinions of respondents' (Cohen et al., 2000). Rating scales were the Likert type. In this study, Likert items are regarded only as ordinal data because one cannot assume that respondents perceive all pairs of adjacent levels as equidistant, especially when using only five levels (Cohen et al., 2000). As a consequence, only the numbers of participants are included in the next chapter in the tables presenting data.

It needs to be stressed here that rating scales '... are limited in their usefulness to researchers by their fixity of response caused by the need to select from a given choice' (Cohen et al., 2000, p.255). In my case, the agree/disagree choice is very black and white in its nature and forces participants to adopt one position or the other. Thus, especially in the case of perceptions, this is rather crude and doesn't necessarily give a true and exact picture of how the participants feel about learning opportunities.

Another of the limitations of rating scales is that there is no check on whether the respondent may have wished to add any other comment (Cohen et al., 2000).

Therefore, at the end of the questionnaire I added an open-ended question, which encouraged the participants to add any other relevant information or views on their learning opportunities.

I personally handed the questionnaires to the teaching staff in all three schools while explaining my research purposes. Some questionnaires were completed and returned immediately, and I believe my presence was the main reason for the 89% return rate. Table 3.3 presents the numbers of questionnaires that were given out and returned.

Table 3.3: Numbers of questionnaires given out and returned

	Gardenia School	Shrike School	Nectarine School	Total
No of quest. given	17	16	14	47
No of quest. returned	15	15	12	42
Percentages	88%	93%	85%	89 %

It is important to stress that only two male teachers (both from Shrike) answered the questionnaire. The whole sample included three male teachers. The male teacher at Gardenia was the only male teacher in his school, which may be why he

failed to complete the questionnaire, since it would have revealed his identity; I became aware of this just after distributing the questionnaires. Further details about demographic characteristics of the teachers who responded to the questionnaires are given in Table 7.1 in Appendix 8.

The following section deals with the issues of validity, reliability and generalisability in my research. The meaning of validity, reliability and generalisability varies considerably according to the philosophical viewpoint adopted. In my study it is discussed from the qualitative point of view.

Validity

Validity is usually referred to as meaning the extent to which an account accurately represents the phenomena to which it refers (Hammersley, 1990; Wragg, 1994). Nevertheless, more recently, validity has been acknowledged as a more complex concept and is defined more widely as taking many forms. Johnson & Christensen (2008) state that, in qualitative research, validity or 'trustworthiness' refers to research that is 'plausible, credible, trustworthy and therefore defensible' (p.275). My research can be judged to be as valid if inferences from, and interpretations of, the data are seen as plausible, credible and accurate (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In pursuing 'trustworthiness', my first aim was to make explicit to myself and then to others the manner in which the study was designed and the way in which it was to be conducted. Thus, another of my aims was to include comprehensive details and explanations in order to enable everyone involved, as well as my readers, to form

their own opinions about my research work. As such, I constantly searched for signs of bias and regularly questioned my practices. Critical self-reflection-reflexivity, according to Johnson & Christensen (2008, p.275), was the strategy I used mainly to examine my methods, processes and decisions.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) use new terms to compare expressions that can judge and evaluate any research with the corresponding traditional criteria. Thus, credibility replaces internal validity, transferability replaces external validity and generalisability, dependability replaces reliability and confirmability replaces objectivity.

Credibility (Internal validity)

Credibility suggests that the results should be evaluated from the point of view of the participants (Trochim 2006). The internal validity of research is increased with descriptive and interpretive validity, reflexivity and researchers – as detective techniques (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), which run through this report. 'Interpretive validity refers to portraying accurately the meaning attached by participants to what is being studied by the researcher' (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p.277).

As a result, I tried to understand and present accurately participants' viewpoints, thoughts, experiences and feelings in the research report. Furthermore, I constantly searched for evidence of causes and effects and systematically

eliminated alternative explanations until the final case was made beyond any reasonable doubt. My main aim was to place emphasis on analysing the degree to which the headteachers described in our cases could facilitate teachers' access to learning opportunities and avoid making generalisations.

Transferability (Generalisability)

External validity is related to generalisability. There is a rejection of qualitative research generalisability, as a goal, by many qualitative researchers, as quoted by Schofield (1993). Since qualitative research tends to place considerable emphasis on situational and structural contexts, which are often unique and specific to a case, the issue of generalisability is of low priority: 'Typically, generalisability is not the major purpose of qualitative research' (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p.281).

Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) mention that generalisability is related to the answer to the question 'How likely is it that ideas and theories generated in one setting will also apply in other settings?'. Some scholars have suggested replacing the concept of generalisability with those of 'fittingness' (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991) or 'transferability' (Trochim, 2006). In my research, the limited data the three schools provided would not necessarily allow for generalisations to all schools of Cyprus. However, the concept of transferability does not exclude transferring the results to other settings. According to this perspective, the qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research, so the person who

wishes to 'transfer' the results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment on how sensible the transfer is in reality (Trochim, 2006). Thus, generalisations can be made to other people, organisations, settings, times and treatments to the degree in which they are similar to the corresponding aspect in the original study. In my case my findings are likely to be generalisable to other schools where situations are similar to those described in my research, and also to other teachers and headteachers experiencing workplace conditions similar to those in the three schools.

Dependability (Reliability)

Reliability is another issue requiring consideration. The traditional quantitative view of reliability is based on the assumption of 'replicability' or 'repeatability' (Trochim, 2006). More specifically, it '... refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer in different occasions' (Silverman, 2005, p.224). In my case, where I was an insider, the issue of reliability was theoretically more threatened because I knew that if I was not objective, I could bring to my research preconceived ideas which could result in problematic reliability.

My first concern was that my research findings should be independent of any accidental circumstances of the research. Accidental circumstances may be, for example, the tiredness of participants or of the researcher during interviews. Accordingly, the timing of data collection was considered carefully. There are time

periods which are inappropriate and can be inconvenient for participants, so for every research tool I employed, I tried to select the most convenient time period for participants.

Additionally, the careful formulation of questions in all research tools is essential so that meanings are clear and questions are unambiguous. Nevertheless, the issue of not understanding the terminology used was a major concern, so I tried to eliminate this possibility, since it is related to research validity and reliability. There was at least one case during the interviews where there was a possibility that one of the headteachers might not have elaborated on her answer because she did not understand the 'informal learning opportunity' concept, which was deliberately included at the beginning of the interview so that participants would discuss it with the interviewer and have the chance to clear it up.

A pilot study for both the questionnaire and interview schedule proved to be valuable, since they revealed a number of items which could be improved (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). For example, during the first stages of my research I thought that the role of promoting professional development was shared equally between teachers and their leaders. In the pilot interview one participant said that in her school they had organised a team with that specific responsibility. So the question 'Is anyone else in the school responsible for enabling access to learning opportunities?' was added to all following interviews and later to the questionnaires.

With interviews, and focus group interviews in particular, reliability refers to the extent to which questioning yields the same answers whenever and wherever it is carried out (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). Several types of questions and strategies for questioning can help participants to talk more and answer in greater depth, which in turn 'reveals what [they] think or believe about something' (Lichtman, 2006, p.124) and ultimately leads researchers to participants' underlying meaning. Some of the strategies I used (most of which are suggested by Lichtman, 2006 and Johnson & Christensen, 2008) were:

- Asking more open-ended questions and giving participants the opportunity to elaborate on their answers.
- Using every opportunity to use probes and follow-up questions to get to the underlying meaning of what was being said.
- Trying to remain neutral and be non-directional and unobtrusive. Avoiding leading questions and constantly ensuring that it was the interviewee who did most of the talking.
- Asking one question at a time, stopping to give the participant a chance to respond. Using questioning strategies, such as repeating the last word of the response or raising an eyebrow as well as nodding and uttering verbal 'um-hms' to indicate interest in what the interviewee was saying.
- Remaining silent after posing a question to allow the participant time to think before talking.

- Trying to be spontaneous and flexible in the structure of my interview schedule to make the interviewees feel as if they were engaged in a normal conversation with a colleague, while at the same time trying to maintain control of the interview and keep it focused.
- Maintaining respect for the participants' valuable time. Face-to-face interviews lasted one hour or less and focus group interviews from one to almost two hours.
- Checking my notes for quality and completeness just after an interview or by the next day at the latest. Trying to complete the transcripts as soon as possible and certainly no later than the week after each interview.

Audio-recording interviews and transcriptions can improve reliability, since responses can be studied again and again. Peräkylä (2004) states that the key aspects of reliable face-to face interaction involve a selection of what is recorded, the technical quality of the recordings and the adequacy of transcripts. Transcripts enabled me to keep returning to my original data in order to reflect on my methods, compare my data from different sources and with the literature and examine for 'deviant cases' (Silverman, 2005). I constantly and actively sought out and dealt with anomalies or deviant cases.

Reliability can ensue as a consequence of deriving data from multi-sources, and this is the very essence of triangulation, which will be discussed below. According

to Creswell (2008), researchers triangulate among different sources of data to enhance the accuracy of their study.

Triangulation

Triangulation is an approach to data analysis that synthesises data from multiple sources. As Drew et al. (2008) define the method, '... it is a process of using a variety of different sources, collection method, or perspectives to check the consistency or accuracy of research conclusions' (p.206).

By examining information collected through different methods, from different groups and in different populations, findings can be corroborated across datasets, reducing the impact of potential bias that can exist in a single study. Triangulation can provide more comprehensive knowledge about ideas/objects studied (Miller & Fox, 2004) and thus greatly increases the chances of accuracy. The use of triangulation can also improve the ability of researchers to draw conclusions from their studies (Scandura & Williams, 2000), since data gained from one research tool are checked against information acquired using a different tool. Triangulation is expected to give researchers the 'whole picture' and improve the reliability of a single method. It can therefore substantially increase the credibility or trustworthiness of a research finding (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

This study included:

- Triangulation of multiple sources: perceptions of headteachers, inspectors and teachers, derived from interviews on several issues such as:
 - The types of formal and informal learning opportunities teachers have in their workplace and how they are valued
 - The headteacher's role in facilitating teachers' access to formal and informal learning opportunities in their workplace
- Triangulation of information from quantitative and qualitative methods. I used the results from questionnaires and learning diaries to help inform findings from interviews and focus group interviews.

Data analysis

As I was gathering my data I realised that it involved a large amount of mostly textual data which were, at first, without any clear meaning. After transcribing my interviews, I placed each group of interviews, i.e. with inspectors, headteachers and teachers' focus group interviews, into separate files using a word processing package.

For each of the above-mentioned groups I followed the process stated below. As I read and reread all the interview material in the folder I had made, I made notes in a new file called 'First Thoughts', as suggested by Lichtman (2006). These thoughts proved to be valuable in cases where I needed to remind myself of something for the next stage of my research. For example, whilst being interviewed, one of the inspectors raised the issue of problems related to the large

amount of new knowledge within schools. I noted it down in the 'First Thoughts' file and then used it in the headteachers' interview schedule and later in the research tools.

Silverman (2005) insists that data analysis should not occur merely after all research data has been gathered. Johnson & Christensen (2008) express the same idea, stating that '... data collection and data analysis are often done concurrently or in cycles' (p.389). A second analysis, at a later stage, could enable findings to be compared with a bibliography or with other data collected using other methods, such as focus group interviews, learning diaries and questionnaires.

Reading and rereading the transcripts was an important part of the analysis procedure. Essentially, each line, sentence and paragraph of the texts was read in search of an answer to the repeated question 'What is this about? What does this mean?' I also inserted comments in brackets in a different colour. These comments were the first concepts (Strauss, 1987) that then needed to be organised into categories (Strauss, 1987) which are higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent. An example of the concept of leadership actions and how it was organised into categories is included in Figure 3.1.

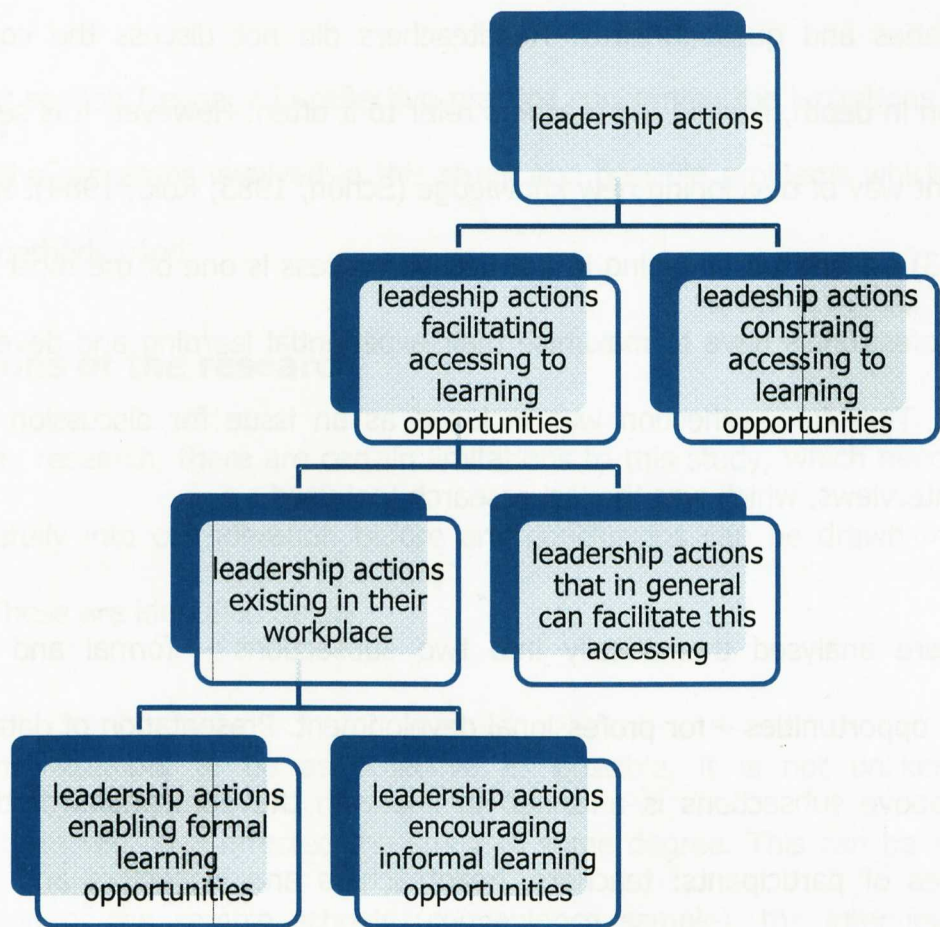


Figure 3.1: Concept of leadership actions

In collecting and interpreting data about a particular category, in time the interviews eventually have nothing left to add to what is already known about this category. This is known as 'saturation' (Strauss, 1987), and when this occurred I stopped coding for that category. Thus, categories emerged.

During the process of analysis I realised that the concept of reflection was regarded as 'being significantly absent' (Corbin and Strauss, 1990, p. 7) at that level of the first analysis of the headteacher interviews to some extent, but mainly

from diaries and questionnaires. Headteachers did not discuss the concept of reflection in depth, nor did the teachers refer to it often. However, it is seen as an important way of developing new knowledge (Schön, 1983; Kolb, 1984). Reeves et al. (2003) stated that engaging in a reflective process is one of the most effective ways professionals have to maximise their experiential learning and develop their practice. Therefore, reflection was included as an issue for discussion in focus group interviews, which was the last research tool used.

Data were analysed thematically into two subsections – formal and informal learning opportunities – for professional development. Presentation of data in each of the above subsections is arranged in line with the perceptions of the three categories of participants: teachers, headteachers and inspectors and for each school separately, combining data from different resources. The only exception is related to the presentation of the questionnaire data, which needed to be presented for all the schools together in order to avoid the inclusion of too many tables.

An analysis in cycles (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) is carried out in the next two chapters, which gives the opportunity to interpret new data and compare and contrast them with the previous data and with the literature review. Despite the fact that this procedure implies a degree of repetition, it was considered as the most appropriate way for the reader to follow and understand, since I had a great deal of textual data which could not be presented all at the same time.

In the next section I engage in reflective practice concerning the limitations of this research, the processes involved in this study and possible problems which arose from the methods used.

Limitations of the research

As with any research, there are certain limitations to this study, which need to be taken carefully into consideration before any conclusions can be drawn from its findings. These are identified below.

Despite my attempts to be as objective as possible, it is not unlikely that preconceptions will have affected the study to some degree. This can be seen in the selection of the sample schools (convenience sample), the interview data collection phase and the analysis of data. I tried to minimise subjectivity by engaging in constant reflection and reading of the relevant literature whilst at the same time being clear and detailed in my descriptions and analysis. Holland & Ramazanoglou (1994) stressed the need for researchers to control their own subjectivity through the rigour of their research method (1994). Kelle (2005) suggests that qualitative researchers cannot drop their 'own lenses and conceptual networks', since they would not be able to 'perceive, observe and describe meaningful events any longer' (p.3). On the other hand, my subjectivity, personal emotions, prejudices and preconceptions as a teacher helped me to understand the school culture better and to extract more meaning during the interviews and

focus group interviews than if I had not been a teacher. However, triangulation, as discussed above, with quantitative data from questionnaires and diaries counteracted possible subjectivity.

The study's findings are limited to the three schools where the investigation took place. These cases are likely to be generalisable to other schools of similar size and culture, and there is also a possibility for findings to apply beyond the specific cases, although of course it cannot be ascertained without further investigation.

Another limitation to be considered is the validity and reliability of the respondents' replies. These can be questioned, particularly where headteachers were asked to discuss objectively organisational/structural and cultural working conditions and state how often those working conditions were presented in their school (interview schedule, item 11, appendix 4) in relation to the 'insider' researcher issue (Robson, 1993). A particular ethical concern was whether the research participants felt 'obliged' to participate because of their previous acquaintance with me, or for other reasons. The problems are:

- Whether my insider knowledge led me to make assumptions and to miss potentially important information (Le Gallais, 2003)
- The possibility that the respondents might have told me what they thought I wanted to hear or presented themselves in a good light.

Although the data collected may include an element of bias, it is argued that this is not very significant because efforts were made throughout the study to take all appropriate precautions, including the wording of questions and triangulation of data, as described throughout the thesis.

The final limitation I will discuss is the use of two languages during the different stages of my research. All data were collected in Greek and I also transcribed interviews and organised the material from diaries in the same language. The first interviews' data analysis was made in Greek. The First Thoughts notes and the first concepts, as discussed in the data analysis section, were also made in Greek, but while working on my second and third analyses I used English. At a later stage, I discarded much of the material that I had previously translated into English but, at the same time, I returned to my first Greek transcriptions to see whether useful material had been omitted or to make comparisons and, in general, to reflect on my original data. At that stage, I felt that working with both languages simultaneously was one of the limitations of my research. Nevertheless, even if I had translated the transcripts from the beginning, I would have still faced a similar problem. Despite every effort to ensure accurate translation, there is the inevitable concern of conveying the exact meaning (Holland & Ramazanoglu, 1994), but I scrutinised each transcription several times and did my utmost to provide the most accurate translation possible.

Conclusion

Mixed method research approaches, within the interpretivism paradigm, have been used to address the research questions. The chapter considered ethical issues and how any difficulties associated with these were kept to a minimum. Additionally, the research methods for individual and focus group interviews, as well as learning diaries and questionnaires, were discussed and the need to raise research validity, reliability and generalisability were presented.

It was decided to begin the analysis of data as early as possible and as soon as the first data were collected. This gave the opportunity to interpret new data and compare and contrast them not only with the previous data but also with the literature. It was also decided to analyse data thematically into two subsections: formal and informal learning opportunities for professional development. Data, in each subsection, are arranged in line with the perceptions of teachers, headteachers and inspectors.

In the next two chapters I turn to the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data, which were collected in the ways discussed above. Chapter Four deals with formal learning opportunities and Chapter Five with informal prospects.

CHAPTER 4: FORMAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Chapters Four and Five present the findings from my study. The data presented in both chapters were obtained from:

- The five face-to-face interviews, addressed to the three headteachers and two inspectors
- The twelve learning diaries and the three focus group interviews, all addressed to thirteen volunteer teachers from the three schools
- The forty-two returned questionnaires, addressed to all teachers in the three schools
- My research diary.

The focus of my research is formal learning opportunities, which are discussed in Chapter Four, and informal learning opportunities, discussed in Chapter Five. Both issues are analysed in relation to how the leadership of a headteacher can impact on access to these learning opportunities as perceived by teachers, headteachers and inspectors.

Formal opportunities for professional development

Formal learning opportunities, as defined in Chapter Two, are learning opportunities that teachers are given officially by their headteachers at their school

or elsewhere. In this section I give an account of formal professional development opportunities, showing how these were seen to have been taken up, acted upon and managed by teachers, headteachers and inspectors in the three schools. Thus, it presents:

- Teachers' views about formal opportunities
- Headteachers' views about formal opportunities
- Inspectors' views about formal opportunities.

Teachers' views about formal opportunities for professional development

Data from teachers were obtained from questionnaires, learning diaries and focus group interviews. Firstly, common findings from all three schools are presented, then the quantitative data are presented for all three schools together in tables and, finally, the findings that were different for each school are displayed.

Three common findings, derived from the three focus group interviews, were as follows:

i) All teachers noted that whenever their headteacher was informed about a seminar, conference or workshop, to which a teacher could or should be sent by the school, she never refused to send one. Headteachers had the right to refuse to send a teacher; nevertheless, they rarely did so, even though teachers believed that sometimes the new learning being offered was not relevant to the teacher or the school's needs, or that it was not important enough.

ii) The second point, raised by teachers and discussed by all focus group interviews separately, was related to strategies used by all headteachers within the three schools in order to make new knowledge available to the rest of the school teachers. All teachers mentioned that a certain amount of time was allowed at staff meetings for presenting new knowledge gained by school representatives. Another strategy was the dissemination of written material to every teacher or keeping a file with written records of the new learning at the disposal of every teacher.

iii) The third common finding was related to the themes of formal learning opportunities. The teachers in the focus group interviews stated that most of the formal learning opportunities they had been given were centrally determined and sometimes irrelevant to their needs or those of the schools. Analysis of their themes (diaries and interviews) showed that they were also knowledge-focused (see pp. 136, 139-140, and 143) and were aiming at improving teachers' knowledge. That is, topics related to teaching skills or specific attitudes were not promoted in formal settings. Nevertheless, all the teachers had positive perceptions about the importance and value of formal professional development opportunities.

Table 4.1 shows formal learning opportunities. Data were obtained from questionnaires. The second column (pink) presents the number of teachers from each school reporting that they had 'never' received the stated learning

opportunities, the third column (blue) the number of those stating that they had 'rarely' or only 'once' received it, and the fourth (yellow) the number of those who had it 'often' or 'very often'. Each of these columns contains separate data from each of the three schools.

Table 4.1 also reveals that staff meetings or parts thereof were believed by most teachers in all three schools to 'once' or 'rarely' lead to new learning. Also, most teachers in all schools generally believed that they can 'often', or 'very often', acquire new knowledge through attending a conference or participating in a seminar or training session, as a representative of the school. The only exception is expressed by Shrike's teachers and is related to attending a conference. More teachers than the other two schools stated that they 'once' or 'rarely' had such an opportunity.

Table 4.1: Teachers’ formal learning opportunities in their workplace during school year 2008-09

Learning opportunities	Number of teachers (G=15 S=15 N=12)								
	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine
	never			once/rarely			(very) often		
1. Participate in a workshop	0	0	0	10	6	5	5	9	7
2. During staff meeting or part of it, devoted to new knowledge relevant to teaching practice	0	0	0	8	8	8	7	7	4
3. Attend a conference	0	0	0	2	8	2	13	7	10
4. Participate in a seminar/training session as a representative of my school	0	0	0	7	7	4	8	8	8

Table 4.2 presents teachers’ perceptions concerning formal learning opportunities in their workplace. As evident from this table, most teachers valued formal learning opportunities. This finding is similar to those from the focus group interviews. Almost all teachers from all three schools valued formal learning opportunities for themselves, their students and the whole school organisation (items 1-3), and they also like to attend courses, seminars and conferences (item 4).

Equality of opportunities for teachers to attend learning opportunities is acknowledged more in Gardenia and less in Nectarine (items 6-8). The rather negative perception which was expressed by Nectarine teachers related to the

issue of equality of opportunities, compared to that of the teachers from the other two schools, and needed to be investigated further through focus group interviews (see p. 144). The issue of teachers' perceptions concerning the existence of a person in each school responsible for staff development seemed problematic (item 5). There was also disagreement in each school in relation to the above statement, which again needed to be discussed in the focus group interviews (see pp. 137, 141, 145).

TABLE 4.2: Teachers’ perceptions concerning formal learning opportunities

Teacher perceptions	Number of teachers (G=15 S=15 N=12)								
	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine
	(strongly) disagree			(strongly) agree			Do not know		
1. Formal learning opportunities I have in my school are valuable for me	1	0	0	13	12	11	1	2	1
2. Formal learning opportunities I have in my school are valuable for my students	1	0	0	13	14	10	1	1	2
3. Learning opportunities I have in my school are valuable for the whole school organisation	0	0	0	13	13	10	2	2	2
4. I like to attend courses, seminars and conferences.	0	0	0	14	12	12	1	3	0
5. There is/are person(s) in my school responsible for staff development	4	8	7	5	3	1	6	4	4
6. I have an equal opportunity for accessing learning opportunities along with any other teacher in my school	1	1	0	13	12	8	1	2	4
7. All teachers have equal opportunities in accessing learning opportunities in my school	1	2	0	12	12	7	2	1	5
8. The criteria for choosing a teacher to follow a formal learning programme are made clear and explicit	2	5	4	12	8	6	1	2	2

I have presented common findings and quantitative data from teachers. I will now discuss data from teachers in reference to each individual school.

Gardenia school

The Gardenia teachers referred, in their learning diaries, to a total of nine formal learning experiences, some of which were attended by more than one teacher. Five different learning opportunities were mentioned in total, and the four that were school-based included:

- Developing creativeness (theory presentation)
- The educational programme "Oikade" (the programme aims to bring together Greeks around the world by offering entertainment, knowledge and skills that help them meet the contemporary social environment)
- Evaluation and portfolio
- Visit of the English lesson advisor in a school discussion on teaching activities.

In Table 4.2 (data from questionnaires), and with reference to the question as to whether the criteria for choosing a teacher to follow a formal learning programme were made clear and explicit (item 8), more teachers at Gardenia agreed that those criteria were made clear and explicit than did teachers from the other schools. Table 4.2 also reveals that in Gardenia more teachers, compared to the other two schools, agreed that there was a teacher responsible for staff development in their school. Nevertheless, even in that school, two-thirds (10 out of 15) of teachers replied either that they didn't know/didn't want to say or disagreed with that statement. In the focus group interviews the teachers stated

that the person responsible was an assistant headteacher, who was responsible for organising what the headteacher had decided to implement and/or facilitate in relation to professional development.

Teachers in the Gardenia focus group interviews stated that they believed that their headteacher valued professional development. They further indicated that there were many formal learning opportunities within their school, and some had the opportunity to go to out of school sessions and seminars. Learning diaries and questionnaire data revealed the same finding. They stressed that they valued these learning opportunities even when there was a repetition of something known, because they believed learning is important for all, so they organised seminars for the parents at the school to involve them in their children's education.

The teachers stated that their staff meetings were often devoted to presenting and/or discussing the learning experiences of their colleagues. They also emphasised that their school had a clear policy on the dissemination of new knowledge. Nevertheless, regarding staff meetings and the communication of new knowledge, they did not say they gained any new knowledge in staff meetings from their colleagues.

Nevertheless, it must be underlined that, in some cases, during the Gardenia focus group interviews, the teachers avoided expressing themselves freely or indicated they had not fully answered the questions (research diary). For example, when

they were asked what they did after attending a conference, seminar or workshop, they said they presented the conclusions in staff meetings. When asked whether they were obliged to present them or whether they wanted to present them, they answered: 'It is school policy' (Lora). She gave Maria a meaningful look and Maria added: 'Yes, it is the policy of the school'.

Interpretation of data

Gardenia teachers expressed their satisfaction with the formal learning opportunities they had in their workplace and when they were sent as school representatives. It was evident that it was made clear to them:

- That their headteacher placed emphasis on formal learning opportunities
- Who is going to attend a formal learning opportunity and why
- The duties of the person assigned to attend who needed to communicate the new knowledge to the rest in at least two ways.

Teachers considered the above as their school policy to pursue new knowledge and to make it available to the rest of the school's teachers, which may influence them to have a clear and positive perception about formal learning.

Two of the workplace learning experiences were organised by the headteacher and involved university academic staff. Teachers from other schools in the district were

also invited to attend. Gardenia teachers felt proud and expressed their satisfaction at having these opportunities, and they also acknowledged that teachers did not get such opportunities often. The teachers stated that the most important of those experiences were the workshops where they were able to interact with other teachers and focus on their needs and everyday problems. This is in line with the literature defining workshops and other active learning opportunities as high-quality professional development (Desimone et al., 2002). Thus, teachers indirectly approved their headteachers' initiatives and actions taken to promote their professional development. Teachers' endorsement of headteachers' actions may be related to the fact that they were satisfied with the formal learning opportunities offered and that they felt they had gained enough applicable knowledge and skills (Sharpe, 2004).

Shrike school

The group of Shrike teachers referred, in their learning diaries, to more formal learning experiences than teachers from the other schools. The total number of formal learning experiences Shrike teachers mentioned totalled thirty, but nineteen were the same. Between them they named eleven different formal learning opportunities, attended by one or more teachers. Five were organised within their school:

- Lecture by the school inspector for teachers and parents: 'The involvement of parents and the school in children's education'

- Staff meeting: 'Creativeness and development of creative thought' (theory)
- The adviser of Mathematics presents some web pages which are relevant to teaching Mathematics,
- Staff meeting: 'Activities which can develop oral reasoning' (presentation)
- Software presentation in a staff meeting: 'The entire world, one world' (multicultural education).

The Shrike focus group interview revealed the teachers' opinion that Mary (headteacher) did not really value professional learning. Noni said that Mary had told her once:

You use a lot of your free time chasing learning opportunities, you run to conferences, seminars and workshops. It seems you have a lot of free time (she laughed). You know, I don't believe that they can help you more in your job or in your daily routine as a teacher. That is why I didn't attend when I was younger and I don't now... (Noni, teacher, Shrike).

During the focus group interview the teachers in this school expressed their dissatisfaction with both the type and the quality of formal learning opportunities available to them, indirectly blaming their headteacher. 'Formal learning

opportunities offered are not what teachers need. We are sent to what is offered. Our headteacher does not ask what interests staff or what can help us improve' (Leoni, teacher, Shrike). The need for headteachers to discuss with teachers the issue regarding which formal learning opportunities teachers wanted was raised. The teachers reported that their headteacher had not attempted to investigate their needs, nor did she invite any specialist to develop her staff. They added that their headteacher did not show any initiative and did nothing to organise a formal learning opportunity, unless specifically asked to. Headteachers' interview revealed the same (see p. 153). Teachers said that there was no teacher responsible for staff development in their school. The need to develop a school policy for attending formal learning opportunities, in relation to what and who to attend, and how to communicate the new knowledge, was also recognised.

Additionally, it was anticipated by the Ministry and the teachers that new learning should be passed on in each school by the school's representative. Shrike teachers stated that staff meeting time was devoted to this point, although they noted that the meetings were too short and, by the end of the day, when these meetings were held, they were exhausted. As a consequence, the teachers admitted that they usually paid no attention to what was presented during staff meetings.

Related to the issue of equality of opportunities to attend seminars /conferences/workshops, Noni stated that:

I couldn't say that we are treated equally. Ok! One factor might be teachers' different personalities. The dynamic and competitive teachers might ask for more and get more. There are also the others who don't want to be involved in misunderstandings and difficult situations and they stay back and don't make demands. They get less... (Noni, Shrike teacher).

One-third of Shrike's teachers who submitted questionnaires shared Noni's opinion about the equality of teachers' opportunities (Table 4.2, item 8). Others did not share this opinion. Additionally, they noted their headteacher's lack of academic qualifications and stressed that they believed she could not help them develop professionally. They thought she was only able to give them access to professional development from external sources such as the Inspectorate or the Ministry of Education. Teachers did not trust Mary as an educational leader with an instructional role, as they said. However, it must be stressed that, as presented in the next chapter, the staff respected her as a person (see p. 182).

Interpretation of data

Shrike's teachers experienced many formal learning opportunities. All of the learning opportunities mentioned were provided by the staff of the school or by the Ministry, so the type and quality of learning opportunities experienced by teachers were, to a point, different compared to that in Gardenia and, as will be presented

below, in Nectarine. The lack of a policy for staff development in Shrike was admitted by teachers and their dissatisfaction was expressed.

It is also obvious that staff meeting time was exploited in order to pass on learning gained by school representatives. Nevertheless, the teachers' view that they usually paid no attention to what was presented during staff meetings might be one explanation for the fact that they expressed dissatisfaction with the formal learning opportunities they had within their workplace. This dissatisfaction might be related to teachers feeling that they had not gained enough applicable knowledge and skills, or that it was not addressed to problems they were experiencing (Lessing & Witt, 2007). Another possible explanation for both low satisfaction in relation to teachers' professional development within the school and low trust in the headteachers' instructional role, as described by Murphy (1990), Bush & Glover (2003) and Robinson (2010), may be the fact that four out of the five teachers who took part in the focus group interviews were studying for their Master's degree.

Nectarine school

The two Nectarine teachers referred, in their diaries, to five learning experiences in total, out of which three differed. The following two were school-based and shared:

- Social and emotional education within a school (a series of five Cyprus Pedagogical Institute workshops which had taken place during the teachers' free time)
- The use of an interactive board in the process of teaching (presentation).

In Table 4.2 the low satisfaction of Nectarine teachers concerning equal opportunities for accessing new learning (items 6-8) is shown. Only half of the Nectarine teachers believed that the criteria used for choosing a teacher to follow a formal learning programme were made clear and explicit by the headteacher. However, this opinion was rejected in the Nectarine focus group interview. The three teachers claimed that 'some teachers are never satisfied', adding that they experienced equal opportunities for attending conferences/seminars/sessions and believed that every teacher had an equal opportunity to attend. They also acknowledged that, in some cases, where the topic of the learning opportunity was not related to the lessons they taught, they were not asked to take part, but they knew that this decision was made because the subject matter did not relate to their teaching practice.

In the focus group interview the three Nectarine teachers stated that the series of five seminars organised by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute every Saturday was their headteacher's idea and put in place with the staff's approval. It was also said that most teachers, as well as their headteacher, participated, since it was related

to their needs and preferences. They stressed that, despite the fact that they attended in their own time, they felt that it was an enjoyable experience. The teachers also stressed they had noticed their headteacher was leading by example by attending not only the above series of seminars but also many other conferences/seminars/workshops. Their headteacher was the person who was promoting their professional development.

During the Nectarine focus group interview, teachers reported that most of their staff meetings were enjoyable and productive because they interacted with each other by discussing issues that concerned them and usually following a problem-solving approach. This approach contrasted markedly with the other two schools, and especially Shrike. Nectarine teachers said they usually had an active role during meetings by discussing interesting themes and issues that would help to upgrade their students' achievements. They also stated that workshops and problem-solving were some of the strategies used during these meetings.

Interpretation of data

Some opposing opinions were expressed in the questionnaires, as presented on p. 144, and related to the equality of opportunities for teachers to attend formal learning opportunities, which were challenged by all teachers in the focus group interview in which only three teachers took part. Positive opinions revealed from the focus group interview were contrary to the less positively expressed responses

in the questionnaires (Table 4.2, items 6-8). This difference of opinion raises questions, but it could be attributed to the fact that the small self-selected focus group included three colleagues, who proved to have very close relationships between them and two of them were the two assistant headteachers of the school. The danger of subjectivity is always there in the process of an interview (Holland & Ramazanoglu, 1994), but I believe it was discounted by the fact that during the whole focus group interview process and the participants' 'active' role (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004), or at any other stage of the research, there was never any evidence of high subjectivity.

Teachers' satisfaction concerning the institution of staff meetings must be stressed. They enjoyed staff meetings, since they provided practical ideas about any problems they may be experiencing. They said that after such meetings they felt that they had learned something new and useful. The active learning opportunities encouraged during their meetings were high quality professional development activities (Desimone et al., 2002). Additionally, the formal learning opportunities for teachers focused both on the process and on content, which is an implication of adult learning theory (Conner, 2004). It is also evident that during staff meetings teachers' professional development was encouraged, with the aim of leading to changes in their knowledge and instruction, which in turn would improve student learning (Guskey, 2002b; Day, 1999; Desimone, 2009).

Summary

The findings indicate that, although most teachers in all three schools valued professional development, they were not all satisfied with the way they had access to formal learning opportunities. The more positive views and satisfaction were expressed by teachers in Nectarine, whose headteacher had a positive attitude towards professional development and enacted her leadership in a way that she promoted access to professional development.

Teachers were more satisfied with the formal learning opportunities they had in their workplace when:

- They trusted their headteacher on educational matters
- Their headteacher led by example and modelled a learning leader
- Their headteacher encouraged the development of a school policy related to professional development and the communication of new knowledge to the rest of the staff
- Their headteacher organised staff meetings in a way to satisfy teachers and motivate them to learn.

Headteachers' views about formal opportunities for professional development

Data from headteachers were obtained from interviews. Firstly, the common views of the three headteachers are presented, and then findings which were different for each school are displayed.

All three headteachers stated that there were many learning experiences within their schools. Some of the formal learning opportunities were common to all teachers within the three schools. These included sessions, seminars, workshops and conferences organised by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, inspectors or the Ministry of Education, to which every school in the district had to send a representative. In addition, they were all knowledge-focused.

One responsibility of headteachers is to make new knowledge available to their staff, and the research revealed common findings for the three schools. All three headteachers mentioned that a certain amount of time was allowed at staff meetings for presenting new knowledge. They all admitted that the time available for this activity was often only about twenty to forty minutes, which was never enough to discuss or elaborate on important issues.

Another common observation from the headteachers concerned their roles as facilitators of teachers' professional development. They agreed that the educational

system in Cyprus does not help any headteacher, and especially newly appointed headteachers, to carry out their role, since they are appointed to their posts without any previous training. They suggested that candidate headteachers should attend specialised headteacher courses at least one year before they undertake their official duties, instead of two months later. The three headteachers thought the course included useful knowledge but did not include anything about the role of the headteacher as a facilitator of teachers' access to new knowledge and ideas.

I will now discuss the individual comments made by the three headteachers.

Gardenia School

Athena, Gardenia's headteacher, emphasised the value of professional development opportunities. She was pursuing her own professional development and noted there was a teacher in her school with responsibility for staff development. She stated:

I am attending a lot of learning opportunities myself. I gained most of the abilities I have to help teachers learn, from my own curiosity, efforts and personal free time. I have been studying and working for many years in the UK. The education system of Cyprus did not prepare me for the role of teachers' facilitator to access learning opportunities... (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia)

During Athena's interview she said she had invited academic staff from the university to a conference about evaluation and portfolios and had invited the staff from other schools in the district to attend, too, as was mentioned by her teachers. On another two occasions, as the interview revealed, she had organised workshops for her teachers in cooperation with the academic staff at the university. The topics were chosen during staff meetings, in which they were planning the professional development of teachers. She stated: 'I set as one of my fundamental aims to develop teachers professionally...' going on to indicate that '... teachers cannot remain stagnant in the practices they learned in their early studies' (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia). Athena's interest in each teacher is evident here. In other cases her interest in the whole school unit was expressed: 'Every teacher needs to be developed, and also our school unit has specific needs' (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia).

Athena appeared to prefer a clearer and more rigid guiding process concerning teachers' responsibilities. She stated: 'I am very clear concerning teachers' responsibilities and duties'. She would also explain her decisions and thoughts during staff meetings and in her everyday communication with teachers. Athena said she offered all her teachers equal opportunities to access learning opportunities. She also pointed out that very often the invitation for a learning opportunity defined the teacher who should attend. However, when more than one teacher could attend but the invitation was only for one, Athena suggested who

should attend by taking into consideration the teachers' previous opportunities and persuading otherwise reluctant teachers to attend.

Interpretation of the data

The way Athena enacted her leadership influenced her choices and decisions concerning the type of formal learning opportunities offered to her staff. Perhaps these were also influenced by the fact that she had a PhD and also that she was attending many learning opportunities herself. She was very clear when communicating with others; she justified her decisions and used analytical guiding processes to lead the school. This was a possible reason for helping more teachers acknowledging equality of teachers' learning opportunities (Table 4.2, items 6-8).

Athena believed that she had many characteristics of instructional leaders (Bush & Glover, 2003; Murphy, 1990; Robinson, 2010). The triangulation of teacher and headteacher data revealed that she was engaging in practices related to the planning, evaluation, coordination and improvement of teaching and learning (Robinson, 2010) and on the behaviour of teachers when working with students (Bush & Glover, 2003), which are characteristics of instructional leadership. Nevertheless, additional practices characterise effective instructional leaders (Murphy, 1990) and are related to the development of a mission and goals (and their translation into professional practice), the development of a supportive work environment and the promotion of an academic learning climate (Murphy, 1990).

Thus, in the next chapter, the way she encouraged informal learning opportunities will provide information related to the above aspects of instructional leadership.

Shrike school

Mary (Shrike's headteacher) did not pursue new learning experiences for herself, and during her interview some of her comments revealed her stance towards learning opportunities. When she was asked about the headteacher's role in teachers' professional development, she was hesitant and uncertain for a few moments and then started giving examples of the learning opportunities her teachers had recently had within their school or in courses, seminars or conferences out of school. At another point in the interview, she acknowledged the importance of the headteacher's role in promoting teachers' professional development, but added: '... Of course, if teachers are not interested in their professional development, whatever headteachers do or believe is useless. They can do nothing!' In general, although she admitted the value of formal learning when asked, she did not emphasise it at any point in her interview.

Mary stressed that she always respects teachers' requests or wishes, 'as long as they do not leave the school and their duties very often'. She said: 'If the school is obliged to send a representative to a seminar or conference but there isn't a teacher who's interested in attending it, I won't force anyone to go'.

Concerning the issue of how teachers are selected to go to formal learning opportunities, Mary believes that:

... it depends on their wishes and their families' needs. Some of them might want to go but they can't because of young children or other obligations. We would never force a colleague to attend... Colleagues decide for themselves, but in the case where several teachers would like to attend, the person who is able and willing to transmit the new knowledge to the rest is going to be preferred... (Mary, headteacher, Shrike).

At another point she added: 'If a teacher is interested in a lot of subjects, (s)he cannot leave his/her pupils every week.... We prefer learning opportunities which serve the school's needs...'.

Mary facilitated the organisation of formal learning opportunities, but only when asked to do so by Ministry representatives. The school inspector offered parents and teachers a lecture (diary data). The inspector had asked the headteacher to notify parents and teachers and Mary had agreed to do so. However, as stated in the focus group interview, the headteacher did not show any initiative and did nothing unless specifically asked to do so.

Mary admitted: '... we did not discuss with staff the professional learning opportunities they need...'. She added that the Ministry of Education and inspectors offered what teachers needed.

Interpretation of data

It is evident in Shrike that the leadership of the headteacher does not affect the number of learning opportunities but only the type. Mary was satisfied with the learning opportunities offered to her teachers centrally or those she was asked to provide. According to her teachers the fact that she allowed staff to have enough learning opportunities is related to her ability to empathise (Badea & Pană, 2010; Goleman, 1995) and to recognise the emotions of her teachers. She read each occasion, sensed what needed to be done and acted accordingly.

However, it must be stressed that Mary did not state clearly that she allowed teachers to attend formal learning opportunities because she felt that it was important. Instead, it was indirectly revealed that she allowed them to go mostly because she knew that they wanted to attend and she was aware that if she tried to impede access to formal learning opportunities, some of them would object. 'It is a trade union right', she commented. Mary was also aware that teachers had to be encouraged and supported within the school context to develop professionally (Rosenholtz, 1989; Cowan, 1998; CCER, 2004) in order to deliver high quality

education. Nevertheless, as evident from the questionnaire data and focus group interviews, she had not really undertaken that role.

Nectarine School

Dora (Nectarine's headteacher) emphasised the value of formal learning opportunities: 'We never pass up the chance of an official learning opportunity that we've been invited to' (Dora, headteacher, Nectarine). Staff statements in focus group interviews triangulated with Dora's, in that she:

- Was attending many learning opportunities herself
- Encouraged her staff to attend a five-seminar series
- Organised a conference with the involvement of the university's academic staff
- Encouraged teachers to discuss the problems they faced and express their concerns during staff meetings.

Staff meetings were considered by Dora a time for collective reflection and professional discussion, which focused on everyday school problems: '... we discuss mostly what is of interest to teachers and issues related to improving students' behaviour, attitudes and achievements... We are trying to give time to teachers to reflect individually and collectively...' (Dora, headteacher, Nectarine). She stressed that she usually asked teachers what they needed, so that they could

be developed professionally, and 'we write it down so that we can respond to teachers' needs'.

Dora said that she offered all her teachers equal opportunities to access learning opportunities, with which, as discussed previously, the focus group teachers agreed. Concerning how teachers were chosen to attend a learning opportunity, she suggested that her teachers were aware of the priorities of the school and they didn't even declare an interest if it was a course they had attended previously or if they felt that someone else should represent the school. When the subject of the learning opportunity concerned a number of teachers, she passed the responsibility to all those interested to make the choice.

If, for example, our school is invited to a session addressed to teachers teaching Mathematics and we have three teachers teaching that subject, this is what we do. I inform them about it and tell them that by the end of the day I need the name of the teacher who is going to attend... (Dora, Nectarine, Interview)

Interpretation of data

Dora was a learning leader and Nectarine teachers remarked that she influenced them to access learning opportunities by her own example. She was in the habit of attending many conferences and seminars, which demonstrated, as her teachers

stated, that she approved of professional development. Dora was acknowledged to lead by becoming a living example of a commitment (Southworth, 2004; Lumby, 1997). She had acted not only as a role model but also as the 'idealised influence' component of transformational leadership prompts (Avolio & Bass, 1999).

It is also important to note the collective sense of responsibility and the group identity, described by Dora, when a decision needed to be made. The same characteristics of that group of teachers were also referred to in focus group interviews and will be discussed in Chapter Five and in relation to informal learning. These characteristics are similar to the characteristics of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2002), learning organisations (Senge, 1990; Boyd & Hord, 1994; Thompson et al., 2004) and professional learning communities (Hord, 1997; DuFour, 2004; Bolam et al., 2005).

Summary

Headteachers provided and supported formal learning by allowing and encouraging teachers to attend to formal learning opportunities offered centrally, by organising additional experiences after analysing their teachers' needs, by entrusting the responsibility of professional development to a member of staff and by being role models in continuing learning. Two of them were also trying to plan a structured approach to teachers' professional development.

The findings show that all headteachers valued professional development, but with a different emphasis. The least strong emphasis on professional development value was exhibited by Shrike's headteacher, where the type and quality of formal learning opportunities did not satisfy teachers. The headteachers gave different answers concerning the issue of how teachers are selected to attend formal learning opportunities and whether they believed that all teachers have equal opportunities. All of them said that they had never heard a teacher complaining about the above issue. Additionally, the ways roles and responsibilities were distributed were different in each school.

Inspectors' views about formal opportunities for professional development

Data from the inspectors were obtained from interviews. They were the first data obtained for this research and, as discussed in Chapter Three, the inspectors avoided focusing their comments on individual schools. Instead, they answered questions by referring to all the schools for which they were responsible. Therefore, the views of the inspectors cannot be displayed separately for each school.

Both inspectors stressed the importance of school-based professional development, since it can be combined with teacher and schools' needs. They also both identified the importance of learning opportunities, not only for their students but also for

themselves and for the school organisation: 'I strongly believe that workplace learning is the most important type of professional development, and it is an imperative for each school unit...' (Lefki, inspector, Gardenia).

Nevertheless, both inspectors expressed serious concerns related to the issue of circulating knowledge in each school. It was admitted that this issue is directly related to the way headship is exercised. They also emphasised that during their visits to schools they were constantly made aware that teachers were often not informed about basic and important issues that a representative of each school was trained or assigned to deliver to his/her school. One example was the content of a newly designed Ministry of Education website containing important curriculum planning and activities:

Representatives of each school attended seminars related to the new Mathematics website. We had trained teachers how to use the website, which contains important curriculum planning and activities. Representatives were told to communicate this knowledge to the rest of the staff. However, when we visited schools we realised that most of teachers were not even informed (Ino, inspector, Shrike and Nectarine).

Additionally, both inspectors stated that a number of teachers do not ask to attend formal learning opportunities: '... some teachers may be indifferent to developing

professionally or they may not want to attend...' and '... when I present new learning in staff meetings some teachers leave the meeting at exactly 2:00 p.m., without waiting to complete the meeting...' (Lefki, inspector, Gardenia). Ino stated that headteachers rarely ask inspectors to help them organise learning opportunities within their school: 'Unfortunately, we need to observe the schools and make suggestions to the headteachers on organising sessions, workshops or conferences... many times we may be considered as tough and demanding when we are asking for the implementation of a programme in order to solve a school's problem...' (Ino, inspector, Shrike and Nectarine).

The inspectors agreed on most topics, as they were expressing the official policy of the Ministry concerning the issue of formal learning opportunities for teachers. In addition, they expressed similar views to the headteachers of the three schools in relation to two issues. Firstly the inspectors, as well as headteachers, stated that time is one of the major factors which could give headteachers the chance to help teachers more in accessing learning opportunities. Secondly, the inspectors agreed that the educational system of Cyprus does not prepare headteachers for the advisory and guidance roles they have to carry out according to education law.

Discussion of findings from all sources

There was agreement among all research participants that there were many formal learning experiences within their schools. They also all had positive attitudes

towards formal learning opportunities. As was evident from the teachers' learning diaries, the topics most frequently promoted as formal learning opportunities and issues presented at teachers' meetings were mainly related to educational trends and knowledge-focused, whereas themes related to teaching skills or specific attitudes were rarely promoted in formal settings. This practice needs to be reconsidered by headteachers, policymakers and other providers of formal learning opportunities, since professional development programmes need to focus on values and competences as well (Sharpe, 2004).

It was evident that headteachers were taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the Ministry of Education, as most of the learning opportunities offered to the schools were conducted by:

- The school's inspector, Mathematics and English advisors appointed by the Ministry to help teachers in a district
- The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and academic staff at the university.

Headteachers' roles as facilitators of accessing new learning in formal settings were different in the three schools, as described by the teachers and headteachers, despite the fact that all headteachers allow their teachers to attend learning opportunities. Additionally, the three headteachers gave different answers to the question 'How was somebody selected to?', and whether all teachers had equal opportunities.

The frequency of formal learning opportunities was at a similar level in all schools during the four weeks teachers kept the diaries. Nevertheless, we cannot be certain about this frequency throughout the year. Themes organised centrally bore similar results. Moreover, each headteacher had undertaken to organise, or had facilitated, the provision of additional formal learning opportunities for their school's teachers. It is important to stress that the type of learning opportunities organised by the individual schools were different.

Gardenia and Nectarine headteachers had taken into account the needs of their teachers and of their schools. Professional development was addressing the specific needs of teachers (Lessing & Witt, 2007; Bubb & Earley, 2010). They were also both learning leaders (Mohr, 1998; DuFour, 2002; King, 2002; Mahony, 2004) and were acting as learning models (Elmore, 2002). Both headteachers attended many conferences/seminars /workshops, and their teachers were aware of this and influenced by this attitude, as they indicated. Moreover, the headteachers were modelling good practice and were recognised by their staff (Matthews, 2009). The teachers in their schools were more satisfied with formal learning opportunities than the teachers at the Shrike school, which, in contrast, did not investigate teachers' needs and thus failed to provide the best learning opportunities.

Finding time for professional development is always an issue (Bubb & Earley, 2010) and is acknowledged by Cypriot teachers as a tangible obstacle (OECD, 2010). As

stated before, the time available in Cyprus for professional development is mainly in weekly meetings. Using staff meetings effectively (Bubb & Earley, 2010) was one of the two strategies stated by the three headteacher for communicating new learning. The second strategy was to keep a file with written records of the new learning gained from formal learning opportunities, which was then made available to every teacher.

It was agreed by the teachers of all three schools that the written file, which was at the disposal of every teacher in each school, acted as a motivational tool for more learning and teachers had the chance to be self-directed (Knowles, 1980). Nevertheless, as Reischmann (2004) notes, it must not be assumed that every adult becomes self-directed. Some teachers need to be shown how to direct themselves through knowledge (Conner, 2004) and need help to focus on the importance of learning the specific knowledge. Additionally, making data accessible to staff is one of the seven approaches, as outlined by Hord & Hirsh (2009), which can be taken by school principals in order to support strong learning communities.

Nectarine teachers were satisfied with the way time in staff meetings was exploited in contrast to teachers from the other two schools. Thus, Dora managed to use that time effectively through a problem-solving approach, for workshops or the use of other approaches that would encourage interaction, collaboration and sharing. According to the teachers in both focus group interviews and the headteacher, their staff meetings would on many occasions include active learning opportunities,

collective participation, critical thinking and reflection, which are some of the characteristics of high quality and successful professional development (Desimone et al., 2002; Lessing & Witt, 2007).

In addition, Nectarine teachers stressed that their active role in staff meetings, interacting with each other and the fact that they were focusing on issues concerning them, usually followed by a problem-solving approach, made them feel that each time they were learning something new. According to adult learning theory, the instruction of adults needs to focus more on the process and less on the content (Conner, 2004). Teachers, as with all adults, are problem-centered and interested in the immediate application of knowledge (Knowles, 1980).

Both inspectors expressed disappointment concerning the sharing of new knowledge gained from out-of-school learning opportunities, whereby school representatives, or sometimes the headteacher, were responsible for the distribution of this knowledge. They both gave examples of where headteachers were informed, orally and in writing, about specific subjects and were responsible for circulating this knowledge but failed to do so. Nevertheless, all headteachers claimed to be satisfied with the way new knowledge was circulated, saying that teachers may be tired but they are given the opportunity to acquire this knowledge via staff meetings and written material, which is always available to them.

Theorists such as Lindstrom & Speck (2004), Philips (2003) and Matthews (2009) stress the critical role of school leaders in teachers' professional development. Research on headteacher leadership has found that they can contribute to teachers' professional development through the creation of appropriate structural and cultural workplace conditions (Clement and Vandenberghe, 2003). My research found that the way the three headteachers were enacting their leadership influenced mostly the type and quality rather than the frequency of formal learning opportunities. The two headteachers who had plenty of experiences in attending, and were pursuing learning opportunities, were in a better position to organise such opportunities for their staff. They knew that it was imperative to start with their staff's needs and to combine these with their school needs. They had also taken the initiative to arrange and manage additional learning opportunities offered to the school by the Ministry. Bubb & Earley, (2010) stated that 'teachers who feel excited by their own learning experiences are likely to communicate that excitement to their students'. We can paraphrase that for headteachers and their teachers: 'headteachers who feel excited by their own learning experiences are likely to communicate that excitement to their teachers'. Additionally, these findings are aligned with the statement that some of the major factors in teachers learning at work are personality, interpersonal skills, knowledge and the learning orientation of their 'manager' (Eraut et al., 2002).

Conclusion

All participants acknowledged the potential value of formal learning opportunities and believed it is important for schools, as it contributes to improvements in teaching and learning (Goodall et al., 2005). However, it was underlined that these opportunities are only sometimes effective and can only sometimes offer new knowledge, which is in accordance with the literature (Guskey, 2002a). Headteachers provided and supported formal learning by:

- Developing a school policy related to professional development and the communication of new knowledge to the rest of the staff
- Allowing and encouraging teachers to attend learning opportunities
- Organising additional learning opportunities within the workplace, after analysing teachers' needs
- Undertaking and/or entrusting the role of professional development to a teacher or assistant headteacher
- Organising staff meetings in a way to satisfy teachers and motivate them to learn, and also encouraging the discussion of topics related to teachers' everyday problems
- Leading by example and modelling a learning leader.

Formal and informal learning are not regarded as separated entities but as a continuum, shading into one another (Ellis, 1990). In some cases in this Chapter

headteachers' behaviour and attitude could not be defined with clarity without having data about how informal learning opportunities were perceived and realised. Thus, analysing access to informal learning opportunities can give more information about the ways headteachers can provide and support teachers' learning which can be corroborated with those presented in this Chapter. Chapter Five deals with informal learning opportunities.

CHAPTER 5: INFORMAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Informal opportunities for professional development

Informal learning opportunities, as defined in Chapter Two, are provisions that are not given officially to teachers at their school or elsewhere. They are conceptualised to include incidental learning as well, which occurs during chats with colleagues over coffee or when discussing job-related information (Candy & Crebert, 1991) in any informal situation. They have either or both an individual and/or a collective character.

Chapter Five gives an account of the data related to informal professional development opportunities, showing how these were seen to have been taken up, acted upon and managed by teachers and headteachers, according to teachers, headteachers and inspectors in the three schools, and ends with a subsequent discussion. Thus, it presents:

- a. Teachers' views about informal opportunities
- b. Headteachers' views about informal opportunities
- c. Inspectors' views about informal opportunities.

Teachers' views about informal opportunities for professional development

Data from teachers were obtained from questionnaires, learning diaries and focus group interviews. Firstly, findings common to all three schools are presented, then the quantitative data are presented for all three schools together in tables, and finally findings which were different for each school are displayed.

Two main common issues emerged from all three focus group interviews which were discussed by all teachers participating. The first issue is trust and respect and the second is teachers' reflection.

All teachers from all schools, during the focus group interviews, placed emphasis on trust and respect. It was accepted that there would be occasions where errors would be made, strategies would fail and harm would possibly be done. But it was also accepted that mistakes provided opportunities for learning and that the freedom to experiment as professionals, without the fear of failure, is a key ingredient in everyone's learning, whether it be for children or for adults. Thus, the teachers expressed the need for their headteachers to trust them and give them the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

The issue of teacher reflection as a way of acquiring new knowledge (Kolb, 1984) was underestimated by teachers in the questionnaires. They did not mention its

regular use, yet they valued it when they were asked during the interviews. Teachers thought it was too obvious to mention reflection, while some noted that it is incorporated in their practice, as stressed by Schön's idea of the 'reflective practitioner', and sometimes it occurs without their being aware of its presence.

Table 5.1 describes the frequency with which teachers were experiencing informal learning opportunities in their workplace. Data were obtained from the questionnaires. More positive views regarding the frequency of the stated informal learning opportunities were expressed by Nectarine teachers, who were more positive in all the statements except those which referred to reflecting on one of their pupils' comments (item 2), to reading a book (item 12) and gaining new experience accidentally or incidentally (items 16-18). In Table 5.1 we need to focus on items 3, 5, 8, 10, 11 and 14, where less positive answers, compared to the answers from the other two schools' teachers, were given by Gardenia's teachers to the statements:

- Reflect on one of your colleagues' comments on practice
- Reflect in practice during the decision-making process
- Observe colleagues unintentionally
- Discuss with parents and others
- Read an article
- Listen to colleagues' experiences.

This fact needed to be explored further in focus group interviews (see pp. 176-180).

Table 5.1: Frequency of teachers’ informal learning opportunities in their workplace during school year 2008-09, as self-reported

Learning opportunities	Number of teachers (G=15 S=15 N=12)								
	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine
	never			once/rarely			(very) often		
1. Reflect on my own practice	0	0	0	2	2	1	13	11	11
2. Reflect on one of my pupils’ comments on my practice	0	0	1	7	8	7	8	7	4
3. Reflect on one of my colleagues’ comments on my practice	1	2	2	11	8	4	3	7	6
4. Reflect on my headteacher’s comments on my practice	1	3	1	9	8	5	5	4	6
5. Reflect in practice during the decision-making process	0	0	0	11	10	5	3	5	7
6. Share experiences with my colleagues	0	0	0	3	11	2	12	4	10
7. Observe colleagues intentionally	0	1	1	9	9	2	6	5	9
8. Observe colleagues unintentionally	0	0	0	10	9	5	5	6	7
9. Cooperate with colleagues in planning	0	0	0	5	6	0	10	9	12
10. Discuss with parents or others	1	1	1	10	8	5	5	6	6
11. Read an article	0	1	0	9	3	5	6	11	8
12. Read a book	0	1	0	5	4	6	10	10	6
13. Try out a new strategy/approach in my teaching	0	0	0	6	7	1	9	8	11
14. Listen to my colleagues’ experience	0	0	0	3	2	1	12	13	11
15. Participate in a school project or programme	0	0	0	7	8	5	8	7	7
16. New experience gained accidentally during school break	0	0	1	9	6	5	6	9	6
17. New experience gained incidentally at unpredictable times	1	1	1	4	2	3	3	4	1
18. New experience gained accidentally on other occasions.	3	0	2	3	2	2	2	4	0

Table 5.2 also includes questionnaires data and describes the degree to which teachers believed that the stated organisational and structural working conditions were presented in their workplace during the school year 2008-2009. Three important organisational-structural working conditions were present, mostly to a lesser degree, in all three schools: teaching teams, team working and mentoring (Table 5.2, items 1, 2). This is in accordance with qualitative data from the diaries and focus group interviews. Additionally, statements related to reflection (items 8, 9), to advisors (items 10, 11) and to having many leaders at many levels (item 12) were referred more to a lesser or medium degree than to a higher degree.

There are three issues on which teachers' perceptions of each school are very different. First is the issue of peer observation (item 6), where more of Gardenia's teachers stated that they were experiencing it to a high or very high degree. Second is 'participation in the decision making process' (item 7), which in Shrike was referred more to a high or very high degree. Third is access to the internet, to books, articles, other materials and knowledge (items 3-5), which was stated to be presented mostly to a high or very high degree in each school. Shrike's teachers were the least satisfied on these issues (items 3-5). All the above will be discussed further in relation to interviews and focus group interviews.

Table 5.2: The degree to which teachers believed that organisational-structural working conditions were present in their workplace

Organisational-structural working conditions	Number of teachers (G=15 S=15 N=12)								
	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine
	Not at all			To a lessen / medium degree			To a (very) high degree		
1. Teaching teams and team-working	2	1	1	10	12	8	3	2	6
2. Mentoring	4	8	4	6	4	5	4	3	3
3. Access to the internet	0	0	0	2	2	1	13	12	10
4. Access to books, articles and other knowledge	0	0	0	3	7	1	12	8	11
5. Access to other materials	0	0	0	2	3	3	13	12	9
6. Peer observation	0	9	3	2	4	5	13	2	4
7. Participation in the decision making process	0	0	0	8	4	5	7	11	7
8. Time for learning and reflection within organisation	2	0	1	8	9	4	5	6	6
9. Space/area within organisation for learning and reflection	1	2	0	8	8	4	6	5	8
10. Useful feedback from inspector or advisor	0	0	0	9	10	6	6	5	6
11. Colleagues having advisory roles	4	6	1	6	5	6	5	4	5
12. Many leaders at many levels	1	1	0	8	9	7	6	5	5
13. Having the role of leader in a specific sector within school unit	1	4	0	7	7	5	6	4	7

Table 5.3 includes data from questionnaires and shows the degree to which teachers believed that the cultural working conditions referred to in the questionnaire existed in their workplace. As can be seen from Table 5.3, teachers in general evaluated their school culture positively, and there were no significant differences between the opinions of the teachers of the three schools.

Attention needs to be given to two issues:

- More teachers in Shrike stated that the use of a problem-solving approach to solve school issues and the use of reflection on practice (items 12, 13) were presented to a lesser or medium degree than to a high or very high degree.
- Concerning the issue as to whether teachers felt safe to experiment with innovations and improvement (item 7), in Shrike more teachers than in each of the other schools stated that this was presented to a high or very high degree. Nevertheless, for the statement as to whether they were supported when they took risks, fewer Shrike teachers than for each of the other two schools stated that it was presented to a high or very high degree.

Table 5.3: The degree to which teachers believed that the stated cultural working conditions were present in their workplace

Cultural working conditions	Number of teachers								
	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine	Gardenia	Shrike	Nectarine
	Not at all			To a lessen / medium degree			To a (very) high degree		
1.Collegiality-collaboration	0	0	0	6	5	3	9	10	9
2.Collective goal setting	0	0	0	5	6	2	10	9	10
3.Common vision and expectations defined within school	0	0	0	3	7	4	12	8	8
4.Group identity developed within school	0	0	0	7	5	3	8	9	9
5.Strong sense of responsibility for the quality of education offered	0	0	0	4	3	1	11	12	11
6.Teachers feel that they are trusted	0	0	0	3	1	1	12	14	11
7.Teachers feel safe to experiment with innovations and improvements	0	0	0	3	2	0	12	13	12
8.Teachers are supported when they take risks (e.g. try out new methods)	0	0	0	5	7	2	10	8	10
9.Teachers feel strong emotional support for what they are doing	0	1	0	4	4	3	11	10	12
10.Teachers are encouraged to attend conferences / seminars for their professional development, during their free time	0	0	0	2	2	1	13	13	11
11.Teachers are encouraged to attend conferences/ seminars for their professional development, during school time	0	0	1	2	3	2	13	12	9
12. Use of problem-solving approach to solve school issues	0	0	0	7	8	3	8	7	9
13.Reflection on practice	0	0	1	5	8	3	10	7	8
14.Creativity and criticality are encouraged	0	0	0	2	5	1	13	10	11
15. Teachers are encouraged to show their passion/ enthusiasm/dedication to pupils	0	0	0	4	5	1	11	10	11

I have presented common findings and quantitative data from teachers. I will now discuss data from teachers in reference to each school individually.

Gardenia school

Peer observation was mentioned in diaries more times in Gardenia than in the other two schools. Focus group interviews revealed that peer observation was encouraged by their headteacher, and the teachers stated that their headteacher was preparing a programme of peer observation and was checking whether they were implementing it effectively. Additionally, as presented in Table 5.2 (item 6), more Gardenia teachers believed that peer observation was present in their school to a high degree. Specifically, this statement was supported by more than double the number of Gardenia teachers compared to the other two schools.

Another important issue derived from diaries is related to reflections. All Gardenia teachers, during the four weeks they kept the diaries, mentioned more than once that they had reflected on at least one of their headteacher's comments on their practice. During focus group interviews they stated that their headteacher visited their classes to observe lessons and then discussed any emerging issues thereafter.

In the Gardenia focus group interview, Athena was described as the person who made suggestions and then checked periodically whether teachers adopted them correctly. She usually described clearly what she expected to be done, when it should be done and how it should be done. She was 'very detailed in analysing her thoughts and very good at discussing several educational issues with us [teachers]...' (Zoe, teacher, Gardenia). The teachers admitted that while they were listening, engaging in dialogue and discussing emerging issues with their headteacher, they could also model reflection. Nevertheless, in another point they stated that discussions on educational issues among staff were not presented often enough in their school.

There were cases where Athena analysed in detail teachers' behaviours and attitudes towards her guidelines. The teachers believed that the constant analysis by their headteacher of everything happening in school was not the best strategy. They believed that '...where issues concern teacher behaviour, the headteacher should discuss it privately and politely and only when something can be improved...' (Zoe, teacher, Gardenia). Furthermore, '... when the case is over, it cannot be repeated and is of little importance, [so] it should not be discussed with teachers, especially when it is obvious that they had realised their error....' (Maria, teacher, Gardenia). They added that teachers are professionals and usually are aware when something goes wrong: '... after all, we are human beings and make mistakes...' (Maria, teacher, Gardenia). 'Detailed analysis of every mishap by our headteacher may mean that (s)he does not trust us as (s)he should...' (Zoe,

teacher, Gardenia). Teachers also believed that this can influence their future actions and decisions.

Teachers in Gardenia said they were directed to attend many formal learning opportunities and therefore did not have time to interact with colleagues during free time at school. They also said they did not even have a minute of free time, could not relax and did not have friendly relations with most of their colleagues; consequently, they usually did not share knowledge and practice. They felt isolated and did not often have informal discussions related to teaching and learning, which explains why they did not mention many informal learning opportunities in the learning diaries. In fact, they mentioned only 38 in total, less than teachers from the other two schools.

In the focus group interview the teachers admitted that their school lacked a collaborative culture. When the discussion came to a point where informal learning opportunities were defined partly as informal cooperation and interaction with colleagues, Zoe mentioned that '... [cooperation] is applied only with the persons with whom you have the courage and the friendship to discuss things. Not with everyone!'. Additionally, during the Gardenia focus group interview, when teachers were asked about the existence of a school learning culture in their school, they all gave the impression that they did not want to expand on this point. The first reaction came from Zoe, who said: 'There is a sense of group responsibility, up to

a point', following which Lora added: 'Yes, up to a point'. This was followed by some moments of silence.

All of the participants' comments showed that they did not communicate freely, and it was revealed that there was no spontaneous sharing, collaboration or collegiality in their everyday relationships. One example is the extract from Zoe's statement: '...I feel I must be honest. I didn't cooperate with the teachers who had the same age of my pupils...'. Maria then added: '...I don't believe it was only in your case. I believe other colleagues had problems in cooperating...'. Maria added: '... our efforts would have more success if we acted as a community...'. Then the silence in the group and the participants' eyes indicated that they would like to say more, but they didn't. I deliberately left a minute of silence, looked at them and waited for more comments, but they did not say any more (research diary). I then asked: 'Is there anything else you want to add?' but they shook their heads.

During the Gardenia focus group interview, the teachers avoided expressing themselves freely, or showed that they had not fully answered the questions when they were asked about the process of decision making and whether their opinions were taken into account. There was silence for a few seconds and then the teachers looked at each other. Maria said: 'Sometimes... [seconds of silence]... in some issues... less than in other school years...'. It seemed that it was a sensitive issue and it would not have been right for the researcher to persist in further

examining reasons and circumstances. It was obvious that the group did not want to extend the discussion (research diary).

Interpretation of data

Comparing the frequency of learning experiences within schools, the diaries and focus group interviews revealed that, in general, Gardenia teachers experienced fewer informal learning opportunities, whereas they had more than or an equal number of formal learning opportunities in three out of the four mentioned (Table 4.1, items 1-4), as presented in the previous section. This relates to the fact that teachers experienced limited collaboration, cooperation and involvement in the decision making process. Teaching cultures of isolation, contrived collegiality and balkanisation (Hargreaves, 1994) existed within their workplace. However, balkanisation prevailed, since teachers were neither isolated nor worked as a whole school (Hargreaves, 1994). As such, smaller collaborative groups were usually formed. Where collaboration was attained, it was admitted that collaborative working relationships were imposed, at fixed times, as in a contrived teaching culture (Hargreaves, 1994). One such case was peer observation, which was present more often in Gardenia than the other two schools.

Teachers acknowledged that if they acted as a community, like the communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2002), they would have succeeded more in their efforts, which means that they preferred to have more collegial relationships. Nevertheless,

for a number of reasons this was not the case. They attributed the low number of informal learning opportunities they experienced to work overload and lack of time. Other reasons were the lack of a collaborative culture (DuFour, 2004; Bolam et al. 2005) and also the way their headteacher enacted her leadership (Hord, 1997), which will be discussed when data from the headteacher are presented.

Shrike school

Table 5.2 reveals that the following working conditions were present to a lesser degree in Shrike than in the other two schools:

- Teaching teams and team working
- Access to books, articles and other knowledge
- Peer observation
- Access to teachers' evaluation reports
- Useful feedback from inspectors or advisors
- Having the role of leader in a specific sector within the school unit.

Additionally, Shrike teachers did not mention peer observation even once during the period they kept the diary. Moreover, in the Shrike focus group interviews they admitted that, in their school, peer observation was not encouraged or promoted by the headteacher.

On the other hand, teachers from the same school stated in the questionnaires that they participated in the decision making process more than teachers from the

other two schools (Table 5.2, item 7). Nevertheless, the focus group interview revealed that the kinds of decisions they were participating in were related more to the social life of the school (e.g. when and where to go on excursions, when to present the Christmas show) and were very rarely related to educational issues.

The learning diaries completed by the five Shrike teachers revealed that they mentioned 41 informal learning opportunities in total, most of which were related to sharing experiences, cooperating with colleagues and learning at unpredictable times. They also mentioned 34 additional informal learning experiences, which ranged from reading books and articles to cooperating with colleagues in several activities such as video-recording pupils. Some of these experiences were related to teachers' studies for a Master's degree, as four of the five teachers completing the diaries were in the process of studying for a postgraduate degree.

Shrike teachers made fewer references than Nectarine teachers to informal learning experiences during the month they kept the diary. For example, observing colleagues and discussions with parents or others participating in a school project or programme were not mentioned by anyone in the group. In addition, only one of the Shrike teachers mentioned reflections – and then only once.

During the focus group interviews the teachers did not emphasise the value of informal learning opportunities, as had the teachers of the other two schools, although they did not deny it either. Additionally, they directly expressed their

dissatisfaction with the informal learning opportunities they had: 'I am not pleased or satisfied with informal learning opportunities I have in school... we are not using the time we are together [teachers] for developing ourselves professionally or for the benefit of our pupils...' (Leoni, teacher, Shrike). It was also added that teachers' informal interactions were not relevant to educational matters, even during the free teaching periods in which teachers should cooperate. In fact, they were devoting most of their time at school, and not only lesson breaks, to talk about different personal and social topics.

Shrike's teachers noted their headteacher's lack of academic qualifications. Although Mary was acknowledged to be very good at human relations and encouraged staff collaboration on a social level, she did not encourage them to discuss or take initiatives related to educational issues. Thus, although her staff respected her as a person (see p. 184), she had not gained the trust and confidence of her teachers on educational matters such as curriculum planning and implementation, pupils' learning, the implementation of innovations and changes within the school and decisions related to issues of teachers accessing learning opportunities and staff professional development. Leoni stated that:

...This school year we have a school culture where everyone gets on well but without any vision, mission or educational goal.

We all have a good time during school hours, but this is it! The headteacher does not care at all about school effectiveness or

developing a school culture of learning (Leoni, teacher, Gardenia).

From the above extracts and other comments of teachers, it is obvious that the teachers interviewed were sure that their school culture did not focus on collaboration and learning. Mary was described as very good at communicating, not only with pupils and teachers but also with all other school stakeholders. Teachers emphasised her ability to create a pleasant atmosphere in the school. They said that during working hours they had a good time interacting with other teachers and discussing many non-educational issues. Mary's ability to work effectively in team settings, and her gifts of emotional intelligence and empathy, were acknowledged by her colleagues. As she was described in the focus group interview, she knew and mastered her feelings and usually distinguished and dealt effectively with the feelings of others. This characteristic enabled her to listen to others and obtain their input before making decisions or implementing change. She was also good at building and mending relationships among staff, cooperating with others and controlling impulses. Teachers added that these were some of the reasons why they respected her.

Shrike's teachers stated, during the focus group interviews, that they did not believe that the staff shared any values or had a common vision. These are ideas which, as they said, were never discussed in their school. When Mary had to deal with educational matters, she did not usually express a viewpoint; instead, she

focused more on managerial and administrative matters. Teachers said that staff and the headteacher usually avoided formal or informal discussions concerning pupil or teacher learning.

The teachers also compared the present headteacher with the previous headteacher, who had encouraged both collaboration and learning: 'Our current headteacher is more focused on human relations, more sociable, more cheerful and pleasant. She doesn't keep aloof from teachers. The previous headteacher did not express himself as she does...' (Noni, teacher, Shrike).

Special attention needs to be paid to statements related to the emotional dimension of leadership in Shrike. The majority of Shrike teachers stated that they felt safe to experiment with innovations and improvements (Table 5.3, item 7), but only half of them felt that they were supported when they took risks (item 8). This finding supports teachers' references in the Shrike focus group interview to Mary's attitude concerning initiatives and new ideas. She would never say no when a teacher was willing to try out new methods or adopt new ideas, but the support she provided was described as very limited or non-existent. She offered teachers little or no guidance and left decision-making up to the teachers or to group members.

Interpretation of data

Teachers in Shrike had very good social relationships with each other, even during working hours, and the teachers believed that this was related to the way their headteacher enacted her leadership. They also had a positive social climate in the school and were open to communication and expressed their trust and respect for each other, which was particularly true for their headteacher. This openness and the free expression of their dissatisfaction with the learning opportunities they experienced might be related to the open communication they have within their workplace or, as stated in the previous chapter, the fact that more teachers in Shrike, compared to the other two schools, were studying for postgraduate degrees. The teachers enjoyed themselves during working hours, interacting with their peers and discussing many non-educational issues, which might be considered justified and acceptable as far as breaks are concerned, but it also occurred at other times, such as during free periods (non-teaching time), which teachers could use for collaboration and sharing. Nevertheless, in this study, this pleasant social climate in combination with the way the headteacher enacted her leadership is associated with fewer informal learning opportunities and teachers' dissatisfaction with these points. The focus was not the promotion of an academic learning climate (Murphy, 1990), which is characteristic of effective instructional leaders, so Mary did not reveal learning-centred leadership according to her teachers.

Nectarine school

The more positive opinions of Nectarine teachers were revealed in some questionnaire statements. This group of teachers believed more than all the other teachers that they had:

- Space within their school for learning and reflection
- Useful feedback from their inspector or advisor
- Colleagues with advisory roles (Table 5.2).

The learning diaries completed by the two Nectarine teachers revealed that they both mentioned 151 informal learning opportunities in total, almost double what was mentioned by the 10 teachers from the other two schools combined. Most of the learning opportunities were related to:

- Sharing experiences and cooperating with colleagues
- Observing colleagues intentionally or unintentionally
- Reflecting on practice during the decision making process
- Reflecting on practice during school breaks.

Data from the diaries showed that:

- One Nectarine teacher mentioned reflections twice
- Reflection on the headteacher's comments on practice was mentioned only once by both Nectarine teachers and within the whole period of a month. This could be regarded as an unusual finding, since it was not in line with the interview and questionnaire findings. Focus group

interviews revealed that although Dora was visiting classrooms and undertaking an instructional role, she was not doing this in the classes of her assistant headteachers, who were included in the focus group.

Learning something new by reflecting on one of their pupils' comments on practice was one of the least mentioned statements in all schools. Nevertheless, Nectarine teachers mentioned it more (seven times within a month) in their diaries, and in two cases this was related to instances that had taken place out of school hours. The Nectarine focus group interviews revealed that this had happened during teachers' telephone communication regarding lesson planning. They stressed that these discussions with colleagues and with their headteacher or others helped them reflect more and also to model reflection.

Learning something new by reflecting on a colleague's comments on their practice was again mentioned more frequently (more than double the other schools) in Nectarine, and it was also mentioned in relation to out-of-school hours. Teachers from the other two schools did not mention it very often and only once related to out-of-school hours.

When teachers were asked whether they felt that they were more reflective in Nectarine than they were in other schools in which they had previously worked, Anthi stated: 'Yes! Dora has a vital role as a motivator and facilitator'. Panagiota

added that she managed to achieve this end through developing the culture of the school.

Nectarine teachers believed that 'Dora involved herself with staff and helped them in their personal struggles regarding conflicting values...' (Anthi, teacher, Nectarine). Panagiota added that, in some cases, through distributed processes, they had the opportunity to '... interact with each other and gained from this relationship...' and they also '... felt a greater commitment to the implementation of agreed decisions...' (Panagiota, teacher, Nectarine).

When Anthi commented on her headteacher's headship she stated that 'she is thinking aloud and she is explaining the thinking behind her decisions... this make us not only trust her more but also reflect on the way she justifies her thoughts... she becomes a reflection model for us...' (Anthi, teacher, Nectarine). Teachers also had the opportunity to become leaders at a specific level of the organisation, for example when they were leading the implementation of an environmental or European programme within their school.

Teachers expressed very positive ideas about their school culture in the focus group interviews. For example, Panagiota stated: 'In our school the culture is very good. Teachers teaching the same age of pupils and everybody in general cooperate with each other. I believe we all feel that it is our responsibility to deal with every problem here'.

A further example concerning the collective sense of responsibility was given by Neli: 'We had a huge discipline problem with a first grade pupil. It was very difficult. He kept leaving the classroom alone... We all felt that we had the same responsibility for him'. Panagiota added:

Our headteacher made it clear; she came to a staff meeting and stressed that the two students (with discipline problems) were not the responsibility of teachers A and B only. They were not a problem only for those teachers. They concerned all of us. She was very clear... (Panagiota, teacher, Nectarine).

Teachers praised their school culture as very helpful for teachers in promoting learning within the school. The Nectarine focus group interview revealed teachers' agreement on the clear orientation of their headteacher to promote a learning culture within their school by encouraging not only formal learning opportunities but also peer observation and team teaching, as well as encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice. However, at the same time, teachers felt that they '... needed to cooperate and interact more with each other...' (Neli, teacher, Nectarine). Nevertheless, they stressed that time was the problem in this respect.

When discussing the headteacher's role in accessing learning opportunities and the way teachers can be helped to improve their professional learning, a new idea

came from the group of Nectarine teachers. They had introduced the topic of the role of the assistant headteacher within the school which, in Cyprus, is ambiguous and unclear because regulations and the law are not explicit on this issue. This implies that the authority of the assistant headteacher to facilitate this access to learning opportunities could be questioned by the headteacher or senior staff. Anthi, who is an assistant headteacher with 23 years of teaching experience, made this point with an example:

If the headteacher tells you 'do it!' you will do it, but you are careful not to do anything more, which is not in your territory. For instance, I have often seen a colleague with little experience realising that (s)he needs help in a specific area. I believe that if (s)he acted in a different way and changed his/her way of organising his/her class, it would be a lot better. But I kept thinking: am I allowed to tell him/her change the arrangements of the desks or that one or the other? Little things that we have observed, during our long experience... (Anthi, teacher, Nectarine).

Interpretation of data

The view expressed by Anthi, related to the role of the assistant headteacher within the school, illustrates that this role needs to be clarified. Assistant

headteachers can be assigned with the authority to facilitate access to learning opportunities, either by formal regulations or the headteacher's initiatives. As discussed in the focus group interview this role needs to be explicitly stated so that no one can question assistant headteachers' initiatives to undertake an instructional role (Murphy, 1990; Bush & Glover, 2003; Robinson, 2010), to discuss educational issues and advise other teachers. Anthi's view is also related to the idea of leaders at many levels (Cohen & Tichy, 1997; Wheatley, 1999) and of sharing leadership (Bush, 2003; Woods et al., 2004; Somech, 2005; Reeves, 2006). Although the teachers stated that they undertook the role of the leader in some cases, and although they acknowledged Dora's willingness to share leadership, Anthi's statement reveals that the school needed more clarified boundaries regarding this sharing, in order to encourage more interaction and for more informal learning to be attained.

In the Nectarine focus group interviews it was revealed that one of the learning diary respondents travelled to and from school with colleagues, so she had time to share experiences and ideas about school issues. Thus, hearing about colleagues' experiences was mentioned more by Nectarine teachers than by teachers from the other two schools.

Headteachers' views about informal opportunities for professional development

Data from headteachers were obtained from interviews. Firstly, the common views of the three headteachers are presented and then findings which were different for each school are displayed.

All three headteachers, when interviewed, said that the educational system and time restrictions were responsible for the limited use of mentoring, teaching teams and team working, and they all stressed that they needed more time in order to fulfil their roles as leaders. In addition, they all agreed that the educational system in Cyprus does not help them to carry out their role as facilitators of learning, since they are appointed to their first headteacher posts without any previous training. The three headteachers felt that the available headteacher course covers a lot of useful knowledge; nonetheless, they all agreed that it does not include anything about the role of the headteacher as a facilitator of teachers accessing new knowledge. Both inspectors raised the same issues of time and the inappropriate preparation of headteachers to undertake this role. All headteachers and inspectors agreed on the above issues.

Gardenia School

Athena (Gardenia) believed that there was a school learning culture in her school but not 'in balance', as she put it. She explained that during the previous five years the school had had another headteacher, who did not try to work on school culture. She added that '... there were a number of teachers who needed to learn their roles and especially their role boundaries...'. She admitted that she would like to establish more instances of peer observation and the process of counselling, but she added 'I do not dare to introduce it, not at this time' (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia).

Athena also said that she encouraged peer observation, which she backed up with specific examples. She was also trying to undertake an instructional role by visiting classrooms to observe teachers and then discussing and advising at the end of the lesson. As evident from her interview, she appeared to prefer a clearer and more rigid guiding process concerning teachers' responsibilities, which was also stated in the focus group interviews by her teachers (see p. 177).

During the interview Athena's discourse appeared to revolve around the words 'me' and 'I'. Concerning the development of group identity within the school, Athena claimed that:

... a lot of initiatives started from me – I don't want to say that,
but they did. I started them so that teachers could reflect on

them and they accepted them. They have realised that I am open to discussion and willing to change things... (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia).

Athena also stressed her belief that nothing must be left unresolved within the school because she knows that if it is neglected, the phenomenon of avalanche will be created.

Everything that comes to my attention, even the slightest thing, even what concerns teachers' relationships, I will solve it. Nothing will be left unresolved... I admit that we have to deal with some problems repeatedly but it is a way to strengthen our position... Some teachers believed that I was siding with a certain teacher or teachers. It took them a while to realise that I don't side with anybody; I only support the school's objectives, ideas and values' (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia).

Athena admitted the lack of a collaborative culture, although she said that she had been trying to overcome this problem, as she considered it as a remnant of the culture established by the previous headteacher. Her teachers agreed that their school culture was not collaborative.

Concerning the statement 'teachers feel that they are trusted and norms of openness predominate within the school', Athena admitted that:

I have been working hard on this. I have succeeded up to a point because they were used to something different... I feel that I'm tired of working on that sector and that I still don't have this trust from every teacher in my school... (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia).

When she was asked whether teachers feel a strong emotional support for what they are doing, she hesitated and answered 'Yes...', adding nothing more. Her response was followed by silence. Concerning the statement 'teachers feel safe to experiment with innovations and improvements', Athena stated:

This is another issue where there was a problem. Some teachers believed that they could experiment without briefing and guidance from the headteacher. I am in favour of new ideas, methods and innovations but I believe that they need to be initiated by the headteacher and the leading team... (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia).

Concerning the question whether teachers are supported when they take risks and try out new methods or adopt new ideas, the answer was 'Yes, when they inform the headteacher'. Additionally, Athena commented:

We have achieved collegiality and cooperation. I believe we need a lot of monitoring in order to maintain this. There are a lot of assertive and forceful personalities who collect and promote initiatives but at the same time belittle the contribution of their colleagues... (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia).

At another point, when Athena was asked whether 'teachers are encouraged to show their passion, enthusiasm and dedication to their pupils and to their profession', she replied:

...we feel now with the Christmas show that we can be together and work collectively. We solved some communication problems – we couldn't communicate effectively – and some problems, where infringement of power had been observed. We solved some misunderstandings among teachers... Teachers realised that I wasn't siding with anyone in particular, which was very difficult for some of them to understand. Nor have I supported any teacher in particular. This was not easily achieved. It was

due to the previous school culture... (Athena, headteacher, Gardenia).

Interpretation of the data

As mentioned, Athena said 'we have reached collegiality' and 'I believe we need a lot of monitoring in order to maintain collegiality'. Although the first sentence of her remarks contradicts the rest of the statement, it is obvious that the issues of teacher collegiality (Rosenholtz, 1989; Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006; Reeves, 2006) and cooperation need further consideration on the part of the headteacher, who discusses and analyses everything happening in her school with the teachers involved. Nevertheless, as presented in the previous section, this constant analysis of everything happening within the school, which was necessary, according to Athena, in order to prevent unwanted behaviour, seemed to be rejected by her teachers. She was not viewed as a 'servant of the team' (Keep & Rainbird, 2002), as headteachers in a learning organisation are meant to be seen.

The interaction between staff and their general relationships seemed to be problematic. Teachers' communication did not seem to be open and their headteacher was working on developing teachers' trust in her. The previous school culture was blamed by the headteacher. These situations might influence teachers' open communication and limited cooperation and collegiality (Hord & Hirsh, 2009; Rosenholtz, 1989; Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006).

Gardenia's headteacher was described by both the headteacher and her teachers as asking for more teacher collaboration, team activities and peer observation. This might be related to the fact that she realised that her school culture needed to be more collaborative, or it might be related to the way she was enacting her leadership. Nevertheless, her school lacked a learning culture. Thus, despite her requirements for collegiality and her efforts to find time for teachers to collaborate, the aim of collaboration was not fully attained. Perhaps Collins' ideas about 'level 5 leaders' (2001) could help Athena to improve and develop her school. The emotional skill of empathy (Goleman, 1995) could also help her to discriminate her teachers' feelings and emotions and then use them information to guide her thinking and actions (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003)

Shrike school

Mary started her interview by saying that she was trying to practise distributed leadership. When she was asked how she identified an 'informal learning opportunity', she said 'A colleague, I imagine, undertakes a subject and applies some new ideas in his/her classroom and then informs staff. Hmmm... [after some more thought she added] it may also mean cooperation with teachers teaching the same age group...' (Mary, headteacher, Shrike).

Her style of expression, the tone of her voice and the words, 'I imagine', revealed her uncertainty in answering this question. The same hesitation appeared at different points during the interview. It was evident that this term, as well as others used during interview, was new to her (research diary). Mary connected the idea of the school's learning culture with the idea of the effective school. She believed that 'democratic leadership', as she called it, is the most effective way to achieve a learning culture within a school, so this was the style she exercised in order to lead her school. She believed that a learning culture dominated in her school, stressing '... this is my opinion. You need to ask my teachers about this issue, too!' (Mary, headteacher, Shrike).

Mary did not focus on the substance of each research question in some cases, preferring instead to reply with a question addressed to the researcher, to avoid answering or to say that someone else needed to be asked. For example, when she was describing the informal learning opportunities teachers had in their school she said 'It is very difficult to find time to do anything more than formal learning opportunities the Ministry offers... very difficult... isn't it? What do you think?' (Mary, headteacher, Shrike). Additionally, throughout her interview she avoided expressing a strong belief about the value of both formal and informal learning opportunities.

Another example was when she was discussing informal learning opportunities and she was asked whether her school was involved in any educational programme.

She answered 'Why should we be involved? Teachers are engaging in so many activities, ecological and others... it is unnecessary to be involved in such programmes... we would be obliged to follow deadlines and specific programmes...'
(Mary, headteacher, Shrike).

Mary believed that her school was promoting learning, her teachers were trying hard to prepare their lessons and thus Shrike had a learning school culture. When she was asked what the teachers usually discussed when they were not teaching, she stated: 'All sort of things... family and personal issues, where to go out... and that staff'. In another instance she mentioned: 'Why do teachers have to discuss their workplace issues during breaks and non-teaching time? Do they have something to solve?... It's up to teachers if they want to discuss educational issues... I think teachers working with the same age of children are trying to find time to discuss the teaching material, but it is difficult to find time, even once a week'. Through the conversation it was obvious that Mary was not undertaking an instructional role and she did not encourage mentoring and team working.

Interpretation of data

In Shrike, it appeared that the headteacher did not emphasise learning opportunities, and it was indirectly revealed that she did not value them as much as the other two headteachers. Although, as presented in the previous section, she

allowed teachers to access formal learning opportunities, she did not encourage collaboration and collegiality in educational matters.

Shrike's teachers, as stressed in the previous section, expressed their dissatisfaction concerning the informal experiences they were experiencing. This might be related to their headteacher's attitude towards learning or her reluctance to undertake an instructional role or to encourage teachers to engage in educational issues. It might also be related to the lack of a shared vision and mission within the school, as the teachers stated. Bolam et al. (2005) stressed the importance of vision and mission for the development of a professional learning community. Regarding the headteacher's belief that a learning culture dominated in her school, it might be because the headteacher interpreted the pleasant school atmosphere and the high level of her emotional abilities (Leithwood et al., 2006) as indicating that the staff regarded it as a learning school culture.

Nectarine School

Dora stated that her school had a learning culture. She stressed the importance of encouraging teachers to keep on learning, giving opportunities to learn and 'pushing' teachers to improve and develop. She also stressed that someone in the school has to undertake that duty, since teachers in Cyprus have life tenure (permanent open-ended contracts) in the teaching profession and would not be officially asked to gain any more qualifications unless they were seeking promotion.

Dora continued by emphasising the importance of teachers being stimulated, reminded about and helped to foster their professional development, considering that '... teachers could just rely on their routine and not bother to seek any more knowledge...' (Dora, headteacher, Nectarine). Additionally, she said that she was trying to reduce teachers' isolation and was encouraging mentoring, peer observation, team working and other collegial processes.

Dora stressed that her staff were competent, so she was able to trust them, letting them '... make work-related decisions for themselves, such as preparing a substitute programme when a teacher was absent...' (Dora, headteacher, Nectarine). She '... relied on consensus and rarely gave negative feedback...'. When referring to her staff, she always used the plural including herself in the team – she considered herself part of the teachers' group, ready to take the responsibility for any mishap, wrong decision or incorrect activity. This is evident from some of her answers:

Our doors are continually open for any colleague who would like to ask for something or wants to watch a lesson... Nothing is decided in our school without having a cooperative study of the subject/topic and without allowing all opinions and points of view to be heard...'.

Collegiality and cooperation exist to a very high degree in our school. The same happens with the collective goal setting... We certainly have a common vision and expectations defined within the school...’.

We are still trying to develop a group identity within the school, since it was constructed only three years ago (Dora, headteacher, Nectarine).

When commenting on the issue of the staff’s strong sense of responsibility for the quality of education offered, Dora began and ended her response by saying that her ‘... colleagues were trying really hard to achieve this’. In response to the probing exploratory question as to whether cooperation was encouraged by their headteacher, the answer was that it was definitely encouraged. In her words, ‘the role of headteacher is definitely decisive, but if teachers cannot cooperate then nothing will happen’. When Dora was asked whether teachers feel that they are trusted and norms of openness predominate within the school, she replied:

Certainly and definitely: the friendliest relations. We know each other very well, each other’s families and problems too... I feel that everyone trusts each other and they can talk freely about their difficulties, problems, wonders and joys... (Dora, headteacher, Nectarine).

Dora also mentioned that during staff meetings teachers were always encouraged to discuss the problems they faced and to express their concerns. This procedure arises out of the school and staff needs. Staff meetings were considered a time for collective reflection and professional discussion focused on everyday school-problems.

Interpretation of data

Dora understood the headteacher's role to promote the professional development of her teachers and emphasised that she was co-responsible for this aspect of school life (Matthews, 2009; Lindstrom & Speck, 2004; Philips, 2003). She encouraged collegiality and cooperation, and her teachers agreed with that view. The headteacher also empowered her teachers to develop professionally and maintained frequent personal contact. It is important to stress that Nectarine was established in 2006 and no staff had been transferred, apart from two teachers who had been promoted. The headteacher had therefore remained the same for five years, which might have contributed to the development of a learning culture within the school, as the headteacher had time to develop some of the characteristics of the learning community, as described by Bolam et al. (2005).

Inspectors' views about informal opportunities for professional development

Data from inspectors were obtained from interviews. As discussed in the previous section, limited use of these data is made because the inspectors avoided focusing their comments on individual schools.

Both inspectors agreed that most informal learning opportunities did not exist as they should within schools. They both admitted that creating a learning school culture is one of the most difficult duties of a headteacher. Lefki added that she:

... [had] seen few headteachers attaining a learning culture within their schools, not only because it is difficult but also because it needs time and cooperation with teachers... it also depends on other factors such as the history and the culture of the school and its population (Lefki, Inspector, Shrike and Nectarine).

Ino (Gardenia), when discussing the behaviour of teachers at all the schools she inspected, emphasised 'teachers feel isolated in the classroom. Nevertheless, they don't ask for help...'. She also mentioned that a learning school culture should be promoted as a result of the overall leadership of the headteacher. She stated:

headteachers must create open cooperation and must take teachers' views, interests and lesson preferences into consideration and always be right and fair. It is important for a teacher to know that (s)he is treated equally... (Ino, Inspector, Gardenia).

Lefki described the development of a learning school culture as one of the more important duties of the headteacher. She felt that the culture must be imbued with trust and effective communication. She also added:

We know schools that are doing well! They are the schools from which we do not have regular calls from headteachers asking trivial questions that spring from their insecurity. When headteachers lack the confidence to develop their duties, how are they going to encourage their teachers? (Lefki, Inspector, Shrike and Nectarine).

At another point she stated 'The school or team leader is responsible for the creation of a culture where there is a proper relationship among colleagues and constructive mutual assistance' (Lefki, Inspector, Shrike and Nectarine). Within this culture, colleagues can encourage each other to pursue new learning, either directly through open, honest communication or indirectly through example.

Both inspectors placed emphasis on reflections for the workplace professional development of teachers. Lefki stated that when they talk with teachers they are giving them the opportunity to reflect and express their thoughts. Ino suggested that teachers should be given the time to reflect during staff meetings.

A different view was expressed by the inspectors, who are external school agents, and the headteachers regarding the existence of a learning school culture within schools. Inspectors in general were more negative in relation to the degree to which informal learning opportunities were present in schools and the degree of teacher isolation.

Summary of the findings

This chapter presented the research findings in detail. The value of informal learning opportunities was acknowledged by all research participants, who believed that there were such opportunities within their workplace. The way in which each headteacher exercised her leadership influenced the frequency and the type of informal learning opportunities. The headteacher of Nectarine encouraged a collaborative learning culture, peer observation, team teaching and teachers reflecting on their practices and sharing leadership. Informal learning opportunities were presented to a high degree in Nectarine. The headteacher of Shrike did not put any emphasis on the development of a learning school culture, and the quantity of informal learning opportunities available to teachers was low and

unsatisfactory. In Gardenia there were more opportunities for peer observation compared to the other two schools, but it was acknowledged that there was a lack of collaborative culture, although the headteacher said that she had been trying to 'overcome the problem'. There were also fewer informal learning opportunities than at Nectarine.

Discussion on the findings

The type and frequency of informal learning opportunities experienced by the teachers of each school varied more than for the formal type. According to my findings, as presented previously, more informal learning opportunities were presented within the school when the headteacher:

- Encouraged collaborative relations and staff interactions, both during the time teachers are in school and during their free time
- Encouraged the engagement of structured informal learning opportunities such as mentoring, team working and peer observation
- Undertook the role of motivator and the facilitator of teachers' professional development
- Encouraged the sharing of a common vision and common values
- Modelled reflection
- Encouraged school effectiveness
- Offered clear guidance to teachers

- Contributed to the development of mutual trust and respect
- Developed a learning culture within the school.

Fewer informal learning opportunities were presented within the school when the headteacher:

- Restricted the creation of a collective culture with spontaneous sharing, collaboration and collegiality in teachers' everyday relationships
- Permitted teachers to feel isolated
- Supported limited involvement in the decision making process
- Avoided the encouragement of specific informal learning opportunities, such as peer observation, team working, teaching teams and mentoring
- Encouraged an overloaded programme with many obligations
- Encouraged the devotion of teachers' time to discussing issues unrelated to education and the teaching profession.

The importance of leadership in facilitating and promoting teacher's professional development is acknowledged (Clement & Vandenberght, 2003; Lindstrom & Speck, 2004; Matthews, 2009; Bubb & Earley, 2009). All research participants stressed the importance of developing a collaborative culture that can lead to accessing more informal learning opportunities and teachers' professional development. Below, the way headteachers implement school leadership and how this impacts on teachers' access to learning opportunities will be discussed. The discussion is structured on the following themes, which are a synthesis of the

factors influencing teachers accessing formal and informal learning opportunities, as derived from findings:

- Collaborative culture
- Headteachers as leaders of learning
- Motivating and facilitating learning
- Encouraging reflection, dialogues, discussions and teachers' interactions
- Mentoring, peer observation and coaching
- Fostering mutual trust and respect.

Collaborative culture

Within Gardenia and Shrike, collaborative school cultures and collegial relationships focusing on learning were not highly developed. The headteachers of both Gardenia and Shrike were found to restrict access to informal learning opportunities, without being aware of it per se. Athena's general behaviour did not encourage teachers to pursue informal learning through collaboration and collegiality (focus group interview). Additionally, ongoing dialogue and discussions among staff were generally avoided.

Reducing teacher isolation can contribute to improved learning (Rosenholtz, 1989; Little, 1990). In Shrike, although the teachers had good relationships with each other and said that they did not feel isolated, the informal learning opportunities

they had in their workplace were limited and, according to them, were of low quality. Thus, despite their very good social relations, they felt they were educationally isolated because they did not share ideas and collegial practices to any extent. Similar educational isolation was admitted in Gardenia, where teachers stressed that their efforts would have more success if they acted as a community (Gardenia focus group).

Shrike's teachers felt too relaxed in their staff room, during breaks and in the absence of pupils. Thus, instead of participating in collaboration, focusing on learning, reflective professional enquiry (Bolam et al. 2005; Reeves et al. 2003) and individual and collective professional learning, they preferred more relaxed discussions and interactions. It was admitted that the school climate was too comfortable to make them focus on collaboration and be involved in educational discussions, and also that there was a need for balance. A positive social climate alone, as established in Shrike, was not found to be related to the facilitation of teachers' access to informal learning opportunities. This is not directly in line with Eraut's (2004) research, which found that learning at work is either facilitated or constrained by the social climate in the workplace, since Shrike's teachers were offered many formal learning opportunities.

Nectarine teachers experienced more informal learning opportunities than teachers from the other two schools. Findings in Nectarine revealed a cooperative culture (focus group interview, interview), with more teachers stating in the questionnaires

that they had teachers in advisory roles (Table 5.2). Besides the institution of staff meetings, which were appraised by teachers and discussed in the previous section, teachers were pleased by the cooperation and interaction between the staff and also between the headteacher and staff. The teachers expressed very positive views about their school culture, and they stated it was very helpful in promoting learning within the school. They stressed their group sense of responsibility, which is more developed in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2002) and professional learning communities (Bolam et al, 2005). Dora encouraged the creation of structures to promote a collaborative culture (DuFour, 2004) and the development of teams (O'Neill, 2003; Collins, 2001), focusing on specific educational goals and improving student achievement (DuFour, 2004). In addition, she encouraged shared leadership (Woods et al., 2004), so that her teachers were sharing what they had learned about their own practice (king, 2002).

Headteachers as leaders of learning

Headteachers can be the leaders of learning in their school (King, 2002; Mahony, 2004; Southworth, 2004; Lumby, 1997), but they will find it difficult to teach others how to be learners unless they acknowledge their own need for ongoing learning (Mohr, 1998). Mohr's opinion was not applied in the case of Shrike's headteacher or in relation to formal learning opportunities as discussed previously, mostly because of the centralised Cypriot education system. However, it was applied in the case of informal learning opportunities. Shrike's headteacher was not

acknowledged to be a leader of learning and her teachers were expressing their dissatisfaction with the informal learning opportunities they experienced within their workplace. On the contrary, in Nectarine, the leader's ongoing interest in being refreshed and continually developed (Matthews, 2009) helped teachers to experience more informal learning opportunities and also made her a role model (Leithwood et al., 2006).

In Gardenia the headteacher was a leader pursuing ongoing learning, and she offered many formal learning opportunities that interested teachers. Nevertheless, the lack of a collaborative culture within the school was a limiting factor for informal learning opportunities within the workplace, perhaps because the teachers were not open to learning (Knowles, 1980) or they did not trust others to fight their own uncertainty by reducing their isolation (Rosenholtz, 1989). The headteacher had made efforts to structure collaboration through peer observation and other imposed working relationships, but the result was balkanisation or a contrived teaching culture (Hargreaves, 1994), as perceived by the teachers. Thus, in reality, collaboration was not structured by the headteacher, as she did not offer an open invitation to participate in substantive decision-making and faculty interaction (Rosenholtz, 1989). Although she tried to frame collaborative work within the workplace by arranging or facilitating the organisation of peer observation, and she saw it as a challenge which needed to be faced by her (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004), she did not manage to help her teachers to access a satisfactory level of informal learning opportunities.

Motivating and facilitating learning

Learning theories indicate that adults are motivated when they are given meaningful problems to solve (Knowles, 1980), and teachers' everyday routines can provide them with many of these issues. Teachers, especially in Gardenia, admitted that activities which can motivate and raise their interest and inspire them to get involved, work collectively and learn something are those which ensure:

- Active engagement of participants (Desimone et al., 2002) and integration of their experience (Knowles, 1980; Rogers, 2002; Boud & Walker, 2002)
- Relevance to current challenges. Adults are life-centred. They are motivated to learn new material, if it is applicable to their real-life situations (Knowles, 1980).

Teachers in Gardenia expressed their need to be recognised and treated as adult learners. They need not be told what to learn and when because, as mature people and professionals, they themselves are able to identify their wants. On the other hand, teachers in Nectarine stressed their sharing of problems and collective efforts to find solutions (Mitchell & Castle, 2005). They were not only satisfied with this situation but they also felt very positive about the experiences they shared.

Dora presented many characteristics of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993). She was described as offering inspirational motivation by motivating and

generating enthusiasm and intellectual stimulation for teachers by inspiring them to be creative and challenging their assumptions with a view to taking risks. She admitted to exercising charismatic leadership or idealised influence by being a role model and by being respected and admired by her staff. She also presented individualised consideration, as she was offering attention to the potential for developing followers.

Encouraging reflection, dialogues, discussions and teachers' interactions

The importance of reflection (Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983) in the process of learning is stressed in the educational literature. Reflection is important in this study particularly, since it can be in itself a learning opportunity, although it can also stimulate teachers to pursue other learning opportunities. Additionally, with ongoing reflection combined with action, individuals can take control of their own learning and development (Megginson & Whitaker, 2003). The low reference to reflection in my research as a process of acquiring new knowledge may be related to the fact that mentoring, as described by Gibson et al. (2000), Hargreaves & Fullan (2000) and Tomlinson (2004), coaching (GTCNI, 2010) and team working were present mostly to a lesser degree in all schools. It was evident that the teachers did not have the chance to use reflection through cooperation, discussions and interactions.

Nectarine's participants attached more weight to the strategy of reflection as a way of acquiring knowledge. Half the Nectarine teachers, which is a higher portion than in the other two schools, said that they can gain new knowledge by very often reflecting on their headteacher's comments (Table 5.2). Thus, many teachers in Nectarine took their headteacher's comments into consideration and reflected on them. This could be related to the following two factors:

- Their relationship with their headteacher, who presented learning-centred leadership (Matthews, 2009; Robinson, 2010) and a high level of emotional intelligence abilities (Goleman, 1995; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003). Dora always found ways to influence staff, without making them feel that they were being evaluated
- The norms of trust (Downey et al., 2011), support and openness, which were dominant within the school culture. The teachers interviewed admitted that their school had a 'very positive learning culture' and that 'the quality of teacher and headteacher communication' was very good.

Time for reflection was highlighted by the participants as always being in short supply, as stated by Bubb & Earley (2010). However, reflection is not a process that has to occur at any particular time, although neither is it a process that should be rushed. It is a process that needs to be encouraged within schools. A school culture where reflection is encouraged, both individually and collectively, can contribute to the development of all participants (Kohm, 2007). The importance of reflection was stated explicitly and encouraged by Dora. Nectarine teachers learned

from one another as they carried out tasks (Marsick & Watkins, 2002), and when they consciously reflected on their teaching experiences, they could transform them into knowledge (Kolb, 1984). Teachers need to have opportunities to reflect on their own experiences and on those when teaching with others, such as peers and mentors (Tomlinson, 2004; Bubb & Earley, 2009), as each element will bring a unique perspective to teachers' self-knowledge. These opportunities can be taken full advantage of when teachers feel the need to share these experiences and discuss them with others so that they are encouraged to enter a process of self-reflection.

Dialogues, discussions (Kohm & Nance, 2007) and, in general, professional interactions can 'enhance teachers' reflection about teaching methods and expectations of pupils and inform teachers' classroom behaviours' (Blase & Blase 1999). As stressed in the focus group interviews (Nectarine, Gardenia), through dialogues teachers have the chance to develop their ideas further, discuss their concerns, challenges and successes and sometimes receive guidance and support from more experienced colleagues. The exchange of opinions was recognised as always beneficial, even if it was about a simple and trivial issue (Gardenia focus group interview). The headteacher's role in promoting these processes is essential. In Shrike the headteacher, who was very sociable, was acknowledged to create a very pleasant social climate within the school through the discussions she raised, but she did not encourage educational dialogues and discussions.

While headteachers were interacting with teachers, while they were listening, engaging in dialogue and discussing emerging issues with staff, they could also model reflection. This strategy was used by Athena and Dora. Other colleagues could also, through this kind of communication, enhance the processes of reflection, which was happening in Nectarine.

Mentoring, peer observation and coaching

In this study mentoring, coaching, team working and peer observation were approached differently within the three schools. Although these were presented mostly to a lesser degree in all schools, it was revealed that in Gardenia the headteacher emphasised and encouraged these learning opportunities and they were presented more in her school than in the other two (Table 5.2). Nevertheless, it seemed that her teachers did not favour this culture of 'contrived collegiality' (Hargreaves, 1994) whereby collaborative relationships were compulsory, with fixed times and places set for collaboration. Although the headteacher's decision to impose cooperation did not lead to the generation of a collaborative learning culture, the decision cannot be criticised, as she believed that this policy would succeed. Nevertheless, she could use the emotional intelligence skills of recognising emotions in others (Badea & Pană, 2010) to handle relationships and conflicts effectively (Goleman, 1995).

Mentoring is a process characterised as intentional, nurturing, insightful, supportive and protective, as well as role modelling (GTCNI, 2010). While teachers are cooperating, discussing and interacting with each other they have the opportunity to reflect on their own learning and to identify the thought processes involved therein, thus moving from ignorance to understanding, as Nectarine teachers admitted. They also reduce their sense of isolation (Rosenholtz, 1989), utilise their prior experience, direct their own learning and apply immediately the new knowledge (Knowles, 1980). In the process, learning can continue with less support from a mentor or coach. The process is related to Kolb's (1984) learning cycle and Cowan's (1998) theory, which emphasises facilitative input. It can also benefit both the mentor and the mentee, as it is a reciprocal process (GTCNI, 2010).

As stressed in Chapter Two, mentoring and coaching are relatively new strategies for education in Cyprus. Headteachers can promote the strategies of mentoring and coaching, which are considered highly effective for staff development (Bubb & Earley, 2009) and are related to leadership (Rosser, 2005; Gibson et al., 2000). In addition, these are roles that leaders can either take on in their everyday interaction with teachers or they can entrust them to other teachers or assistant headteachers, as suggested by Nectarine's teachers. These roles are related to the way leadership is exercised, since they are part of an influencing process.

Collaborative culture involves mentoring and empowering teachers and maintaining frequent personal contact (Matthews, 2009), practices usually undertaken by Dora. These sets of practices are related to learning-centred leadership (Matthews, 2009; Robinson, 2010) or instructional leadership (Southworth, 2003; Robinson, 2010). Moreover, the focus is on improving teaching and learning as well as on professional dialogue and discussion and modelling (Blase & Blase, 1999; Southworth, 2003) and monitoring (Southworth, 2003), as was the case in Nectarine.

Fostering mutual trust and respect

The issue of mutual trust and respect was also repeatedly mentioned as facilitating access to informal learning opportunities. Nectarine teachers trusted, admired and respected Dora (focus group interview), which gave her the power to influence them accordingly (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bush, 2003). On the other hand, Athena preferred to control every decision and activity of her staff, thus using authority rather than influence. She preferred to use her power to resolve any disagreement and to bridge the gap between conflicting values held by individuals or groups within the Gardenia workplace. Teachers expressed their disagreement with this strategy, which might also be one reason for the low level of trust placed in her by the teachers.

All research participants agreed on the need for a feeling of security whereby a teacher can take risks in an atmosphere of trust. Avoiding mistakes is not as constructive as learning from mistakes, so teachers can use mistakes to enhance learning through the process of reflection (Kohm, 2007). However, unless they are trusted within their workplace, they do not dare to take risks (Downey et al., 2011). Teachers at Nectarine trusted Dora and they were prepared to take risks – and sometimes make errors. They also trusted her as a professional, and so they often participated in discussions related to issues that concerned or interested them. In Nectarine, teachers considered as an additional way to enhance trust (focus group interview) Dora's habit of thinking aloud and explaining the thinking behind her decisions.

The Shrike teachers generally trusted their headteacher, since she possessed the quality of integrity and skills of emotional intelligence such as empathy. Mary presented a high level of emotional intelligence, was sensitive and mastered her feelings whilst usually distinguishing and effectively dealing with the feelings of others (Goldman, 1998). This characteristic helped her to build and mend relationships among staff and to listen to others and gain their input prior to decision making or implementing a change. She was good at cooperating with others, able to foster relationships and control impulses. There was a very friendly atmosphere among staff and their headteacher contributed much to the development of that climate. She was acknowledged as friendly and sociable and she also had the ability to make teachers express themselves. However, she was

not trusted as a lead learner (King, 2002; Mahony, 2004) or as someone capable of creating and developing a learning school culture.

In Gardenia, it was indirectly revealed that the headteacher was not trusted, which might be because of the limited time she spent cooperating with her staff, the previous school culture or the way they were communicating. It was also evident from Athena and her teachers' comments that she was not a level 5 leader (Collins, 2001). She had the determination to produce results and was ready to do whatever needed to be done to improve the status of her school, but not all of her actions showed her to be a modest, 'selfless executive' or a 'servant leader' (Collins, 2001). Basing leadership on vision and values is considered beneficial for the school and students' improvement (Collins, 2001; Bolam et al., 2005; Bush, 2008) and it was evident that Athena grounded her headship on these values. However, it was not clear whether anyone else in the school shared the same vision and values.

Trust is also one of the most important components of a school culture, as it encourages distributed leadership (Woods et al, 2004; Reeves, 2006; Bezzina, 2006), learning-centred leadership (Matthews, 2009) and effective professional learning communities (Bolam et al., 2005). Building trust is additionally a headteacher's approach to developing professional learning communities (Hord & Hirsh, 2009). How can power and authority be redistributed within the organisation without trust? In a culture of trust and open communication, teachers do not feel

that the competence of their performance can be questioned, so their 'threatened self-esteem' (Rosenholtz, 1989) may be limited.

Conclusion

Informal learning opportunities experienced by teachers of each school varied. More informal learning opportunities were presented within the school when the headteacher encouraged:

- Collaborative relations
- Structured informal learning opportunities such as mentoring, team working and peer observation
- Sharing of a common vision and common values
- School effectiveness.

Additionally more informal learning opportunities were reported by teachers when the headteacher:

- Acted as motivator and facilitator of teachers' professional development
- Offered clear guidance to teachers
- Modelled reflections
- Contributed to the development of mutual trust and respect, and
- Developed a learning culture within school.

As formal and informal learning opportunities are considered as a continuum, shading into one another (Ellis, 1990) a discussion of all learning opportunities was undertaken in Chapter Five. The discussion had lead to the conclusion that the way headteachers implemented leadership impacted on teachers' access to learning opportunities. Specifically, teachers were experiencing more learning opportunities when headteachers acted as leaders of learning, motivating and facilitating learning, mentoring, peer observation and coaching, when they encouraged reflection, dialogues and discussions teachers' interactions, mutual trust and respect, and when they encouraged the development of a collaborative culture.

Presentation and discussion of findings is followed by Chapter Six. This last Chapter presents the main conclusions of my research and important implications. The Chapter is finalised with an agenda of further research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, EVALUATION AND RECOMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusions

The chapter concludes by referring to key ideas resulting from the study and by stating the ways in which this research provides a significant contribution to the theory and practice of education. Finally, an agenda for further research is suggested.

The key research objective of this thesis was to investigate types of formal and informal learning opportunities teachers experienced in their workplace and how these opportunities were facilitated or constrained by the leadership of the school's headteacher. The key ideas derived from my research are as follows.

The type and the way in which formal learning opportunities were made available, and who they were made available to, differed in each school and were related to headteacher leadership. Headteachers could facilitate access to professional development when they planned the professional development of teachers (Anderson, 2003), when they allowed attendance or organised learning experiences related to teacher and school needs (Lee et al., 2004), when they undertook or entrusted the role of professional development facilitator to a staff

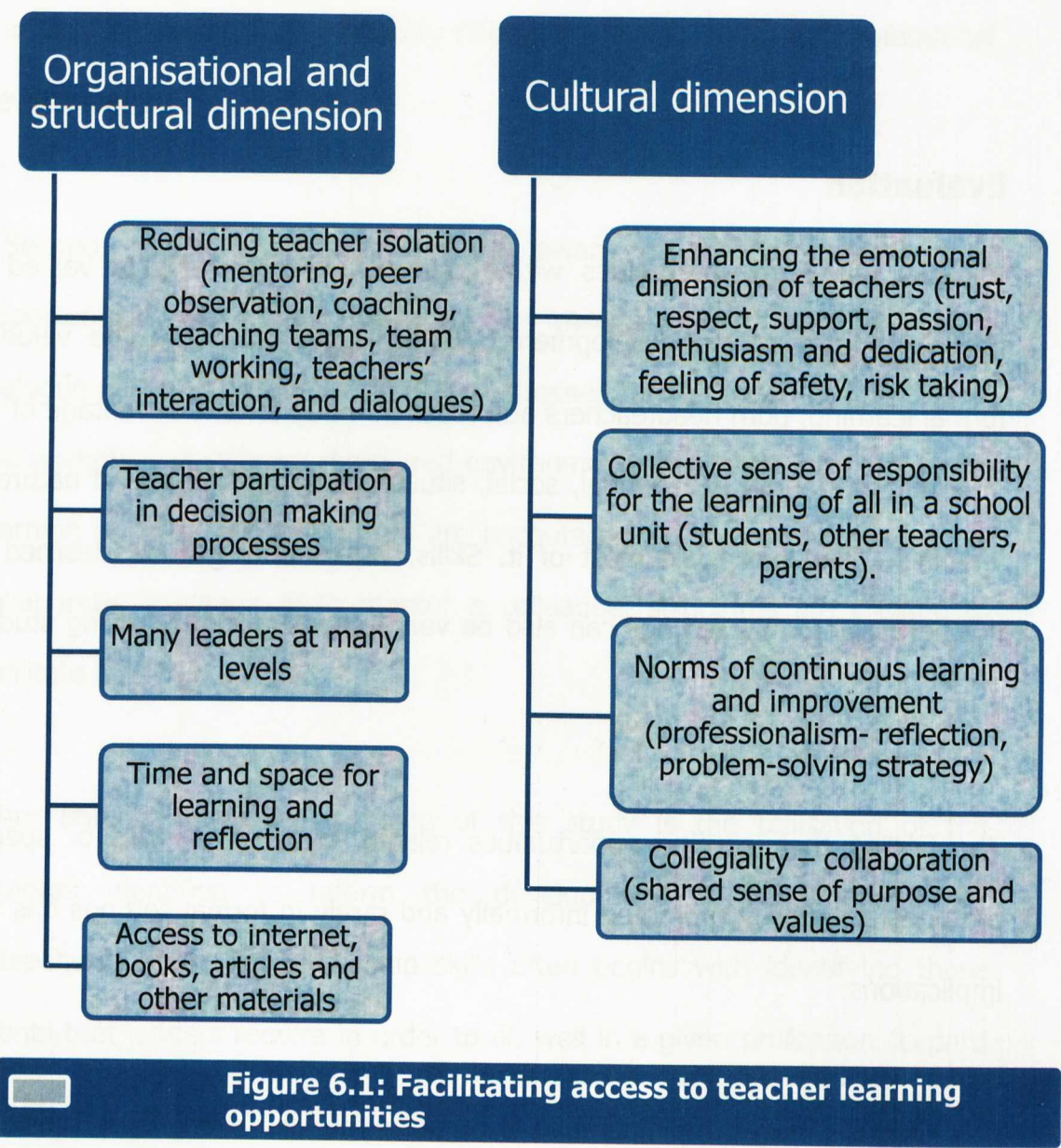
member within the school and when they modelled a learning leader (Southworth, 2004; Mahony, 2004). Additionally, they used or encouraged the effective use of available time within school, such as staff meetings (Bubb & Earley, 2010), for active learning opportunities and teacher discussions and interactions.

Furthermore, most participants placed considerable importance on informal learning opportunities, an aspect of learning whereby headteachers can clearly play a facilitative role, mostly through the way they exercise headship, which was found to impact on the frequency and type of informal learning opportunity. Headteachers were seen as playing a crucial role in stimulating informal learning, being recognised as having the potential to generate a collaborative culture of enhanced emotional motivation (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; Mahony, 2004), trust, respect (Bolam et al., 2005) and safety when risk taking (Rosenholtz, 1989) and ruled by norms of continuous learning and improvement. The headteacher who demonstrated her own commitment to learning recognised herself, and was regarded by her teachers and inspector, as a role model for learning and a lead learner (King, 2002; Mahony, 2004).

Headteachers can develop organisational and structural working conditions (Clement and Vandenberghe, 2003) within schools that are important, and should reduce teacher isolation (Rosenholtz, 1989; Little, 1990), by involving teachers in the decision making process (Bolam et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2006), granting

time and space within the workplace and encouraging leadership at various levels of the organisation (Cohen & Tichy; 1997).

Figure 6.1 presents specific organisational-structural and cultural characteristics of schools which can be enhanced by headteachers and facilitate teachers' access to learning opportunities within the workplace. Suggestions derived from my findings are in accordance with other research studies, such as those of Rosenholtz (1989), Eraut (2004) and Clement & Vandenberghe (2001).



Evaluation

Informal learning opportunities within the workplace are highly valued as leading to professional development. Without underestimating the value of formal learning, both headteachers and teachers need to take advantage of the informal, incidental, experiential, social, situated and practice-bound nature of learning – and make the most of it. Skills, values and attitudes learned by teachers in informal settings can also be very important for improving student learning.

The finding that learning opportunities related to teaching skills or specific attitudes are mostly promoted informally and rarely in formal settings has two implications:

- First, it stresses the imperative to organise formal learning opportunities in such a way as to develop the whole professional and not only a teacher's knowledge, which is one aspect of their qualities (Sharpe, 2004). Thus, the need to encourage the learning of skills and attitudes through more formal settings is becoming apparent. Moreover, active learning opportunities need to be offered more, since they were not reported as being organised often

and are considered high in quality (Desimone et al., 2002) for professional development.

- Second, teachers need to become aware of the informal learning opportunities within their workplace, by means of staff meetings, open dialogue and discussions. Eraut (2004) stressed that although the context of the workplace is rather a structured environment, it is rarely structured with learning in mind. When teachers are encouraged to observe each other, to collaborate, to coach or to mentor a colleague, structures are created to facilitate learning.

Another potential practical outcome of this study is the utilisation of the behaviours identified to inform the development of competencies for headteachers. Improving leadership skills often begins with identifying those elements that leaders require in order to do well in a given profession (Lepard & Foster, 2003). They are also important for headteachers as leaders of the school organisation. The implication for headteachers is that they need to cooperate with teachers in order to identify individual and organisational priorities (Bubb & Earley, 2009; Lindstrom & Speck, 2004), develop a school plan and then share leadership for ongoing professional development.

Above all, my research findings are intended mostly for the Ministry of Education, as the main architect of educational policies in Cyprus, and for the

Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, the formal conveyor of the training and professional development of headteachers. The institute is responsible for encouraging and training headteachers how to enact their leadership so that they can contribute to the development of collaborative learning cultures and professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004; Bolam et al., 2005; Hord & Hirsh, 2009) within schools. Findings can also be useful for the committee responsible for selecting applicants who will be promoted to the post of headteacher.

Another important implication for the central educational authority is the need to explore ways of encouraging headteachers to make knowledge sharing, reflection, mentoring, coaching, peer observation and team working a priority within their workplace. They also need to encourage the connection of teachers' particular needs to those of the schools they serve (Day, 1997; Bubb & Earley, 2009) and to succeed in a continuous interplay between individual and organisational development. An effective leader takes pleasure in influencing employees in positive ways in order to attain both individual and organisational goals (Gibson et al., 2000).

This research has also contributed to my personal self-awareness and growth. It has given me the opportunity to reflect critically on my own practice as a researcher, the process of research and my role of researcher. The use of a research diary and the reflection on my own assumptions are two of the ways

that helped me to use the process of reflection. Additionally, it helped me to reflect on my own practice as an assistant headteacher and as a headteacher since 2009.

Further research

An agenda for further research is presented below.

This study has considered the role of the headteacher in facilitating access to learning at work. The workplace context is under-researched (Eraut, 2004), but it can provide a great deal of information about what other factors can enhance learning and in what ways. An interesting new dimension of this issue would be to identify which other factors, besides the leader, can influence the development of a school culture and promote learning. Specifically, the factors that need to be investigated are those that can influence the modification and development of a culture of emotional stability and motivation, and perhaps the role of the closest colleague to each teacher.

The findings show that teachers value trust, a feeling of security and support from headteachers, but behaviours can be seen operating at different depths; consequently, research could be undertaken to focus only on what exactly headteachers can do to enhance the emotional dimension (Mandell & Pherwani,

2003; Leithwood et al., 2006) of teaching. It could be a longitudinal research observing the progress and the creation of emotions in relation to headteacher and teacher relationships over a period of time. Furthermore, it could enable us to observe the deepening of relationships and the effect of emotions on teaching.

Future research needs to be conducted to identify whether the way headteachers enact their leadership (Hord, 1997; Bolam et al., 2005; Hord & Hirsh, 2009) influences the themes and the quality of learning opportunities to which teachers have access, based on different staff characteristics such as, for example, their teaching experience, gender and willingness to gain new knowledge.

Formal and informal learning opportunities for teachers can impact on practices and improve their professional development. The informal learning opportunities headteachers have available within their schools also need to be investigated and examined, with a view to identifying whether these opportunities can impact on the way they enact their leadership. However, it can also be examined whether the learning experiences taken up and acted upon by the headteacher are related to some characteristics of the headteacher or his/her headship.

Finally, the development of collaborative cultures within the workplace through distributed leadership should be investigated further. Since distributed leadership means different things to different people (Spillane et al., 2005), and it does not automatically result in organisational improvement (Harris et al., 2007), specific ways in which distributed leadership is put into practice, so that it can contribute to teachers' professional development, need to be investigated because how headteachers delegate roles and how teachers undertake responsibility can affect the school culture and teacher learning.

REFERENCES

Anderson, A. (1988) 'Cognitive styles and multicultural populations',
Journal of Teacher Education, vol.39, no.1, pp.2-9.

Anderson, J. (20-21 October, 2001) 'The content and design of in-service teacher education and development', Paper presented at the *National Teacher Education Policy Conference*, Midrand.

Anderson, L. (2003) 'A leading approach to managing people in education' in Kydd, L., Anderson, L. & Newton, W. (eds.), *Leading People and Teams in Education*, (pp.29-42), London, Open University & Paul Chapman.

Allix, M. (2000) 'Transformational leadership: democratic or despotic?', *Educational Management and Administration*, vol.28, no.1, pp.7-20.

Avolio, B. & Bass, B. (1999) 'Re-examining the components of transformational and transactional leadership using the

multifactor leadership questionnaire', *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, vol.72 , pp. 441-462.

Badea, L. & Pană, N. (2010) 'The role of empathy in developing the leader's emotional intelligence', *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, vol.2, no.534, pp.69-78.

Baker, C. (2004) 'Membership categorization and interview accounts', in Silverman, D., (ed). *Qualitative Research: theory, method and practice*, (pp162-176), London, Sage.

Barnett, R. (2002) 'Learning to work and working to learn', in Reeve, F. Cartwright, M. & Edwards, R.(eds), *Supporting lifelong learning*, vol.2, (pp.7-20), London, Open University & Routledge Falmer.

Barth, R. (2002) 'The Culture builder', *Educational Leadership* , vol.59, no.8, pp.6-11.

Bass, B. & Avolio, B. (1993) 'Transformational leadership: A response to critiques' in Chemers, M. & Ayman, R. (eds.), *Leadership theory and research: Perspectives and directions*, (pp.49-80), New York, Free Press.

Bell, J. (2005) *Doing your research project*, London, Open University Press.

Bers, T. (1994) 'Exploring institutional images through focus group interviews', in Bennett, N., Glatter, R. and Levačić, R. (eds.), *Improving educational management through research consultancy* (pp.290-299), London, Paul Chapman Publishing & Open University.

Bezzina, C. (2006) 'The road less travelled': Professional communities in secondary schools', *Theory into Practice*, vol.45, no.2, pp.159-167.

Bezzina, C. (2008) 'Towards a learning community. The journey of a Maltese Catholic church school', *Management in Education*, vol.22, no.3, pp.22-27.

Blase, J. & Blase, J. (1999) 'Principals' instructional leadership and teacher development: Teachers' perspectives', *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol.35, no.3, pp. 349-378.

Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Stoll L., Thomas, S., Wallace, M., Hawkey, K. & Greenwood, A. (2005) Creating and sustaining effective professional learning communities: DfES Research Report RR637, Bristol, University of Bristol.

Boud, D. & Walker D. (2002) 'Promoting reflection in professional courses: The challenge of context', in Harrison, R., Reeve, F., Hanson A. & Clarke, J., (eds), *Supporting lifelong learning. Perspectives on learning* , vol.1, (pp. 91-110), London, Routledge Falmer.

Boyd, V. & Hord, S. (1994) Schools as learning communities: Issues... about change. SEDL vol.4, no.1 [online], <http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues41.html> (Accessed 25 July 2011).

Bubb, S. (2005) 'After 'lunchbox' training - gourmet professional development', *Education Review*, vol.18, no.2, pp.82-88.

Bubb, S. & Earley, P. (2009) 'Leading staff development for school improvement', *School Leadership and Management*, vol.29, no.1, pp.23-37.

Bubb, S. & Earley P. (2010) *Helping staff develop in schools*, London, Sage Publications.

Burns, M. (1978) *Leadership*, New York, Harper & Row.

Bush, T. (2003) *Theories of educational leadership and management*, London, Sage Publications.

Bush, T. (2008) From management to leadership: Semantic or meaningful change, *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol.36, no.2, pp.271-288.

Bush, T. & Anderson, L. (2003) 'Organisational culture', in: Coleman, M., Bush, T. & Thurlow, M. (eds), *Leadership and strategic management in South African schools*. Managing Schools in South Africa series, (pp.87-100), London, London Commonwealth Secretariat.

Bush, T. & Glover, D. (2003) *Leadership development: A literature review*, Nottingham, National College for School Leadership (NCSL).

Busher, H. & Barker, B. (2003) 'The crux of leadership', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol.31, no.1, pp.51-65.

Candy C. & Crebert G. (1991) 'Ivory tower to concrete jungle', *The Journal of Higher Education*, vol.62, no.5, pp. 570-592.

Clement, M. & Vandenberghe, R. (2000) 'Teachers' professional development: A solitary or collegial (ad)venture?', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol.16, pp.81-101.

Clement, M., & Vandenberghe, R. (2001) 'How school leaders can promote teachers' professional development. An account from the field', *School Leadership and Management*, vol.21, no.1, pp. 43-57.

Clement, M. & Vandenberghe, R. (2003) 'Leading teachers' professional development', in Kydd, L., Anderson, L. & Newton, W. (eds.), *Leading People and Teams in Education*, (pp. 123-135), London, Open University & Paul Chapman.

Cohen, L. & Manion, L. (1994) *Research Methods in Education*, London, Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000) *Research Methods in Education*, London, RoutledgeFalmer.

Cohen, E. & Tichy, N. (1997) 'How leaders develop leaders', *Training & Development*, ASTD. [online]
<http://www.noeltichy.com/HowLeadersDevelopLeaders.pdf>
(Accessed 1 July 2011)

Cole, P. (2004) 'Professional development: A great way to avoid change', [online]
<http://www.edstaff.com.au/docs/Peter%20Cole%20-%20PD%20A%20great%20way%20to%20avoid%20change.pdf> (Accessed 23 July 2011)

Colley H., Hodkinson P., & Malcolm J. (2002) 'Non-formal learning: mapping the conceptual terrain', A consultation report, Leeds: University of Leeds Lifelong Learning Institute.
[online] http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/colley_informal_learning.htm (Accessed 24 April 2011)

Collins, J. (2001) *Good to Great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*, London, Random House.

Committee for Cyprus educational reform (CCER) (2004) 'Democratic and human education in the European state of Cyprus', Nicosia. [online]

<http://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla%3Aen-US%3Aofficial&channel=s&hl=en&q=Cyprus+educational+reform&btnG=Google+Search> (Accessed 12 September 2007)

Conner, M. (2004) 'Andragogy and Pedagogy: Ageless Learner', 1997-2004. [online]
<http://agelesslearner.com/intros/andragogy.html> (Accessed 2 February 2011)

Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (1990) 'Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons and evaluative criteria', *Qualitative Sociology*, vol.13, no.1, pp. 3-19.

Corti, L. (1993) 'Using diaries in social research', *Social Research Update*, Issue 2 [Online]
<http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sru/SRU2.html> (Accessed 19 July 2010).

Cowan, J. (1998) *On becoming an innovative university teacher: Reflection in action*, Buckingham, SRHE & Open University Press.

Council of Europe 'Education & Training 2010' programme [online]
http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/teacher_en.htm (Accessed 15 October 2008).

Creswell, T. & Miller, D. (2000) 'Determining validity in qualitative inquiry', *Theory into Practice*, vol.39, no.3, pp.124-130.

Creswell, J. (2008) *Educational Research Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. International Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Cyprus Republic (2008) 'The primary schools' educational law', CRP 225/2008 [online]
http://www.moec.gov.cy/dde/pdf/kanonismoι_stoixeioudous_ekpaidevsi2008.pdf (Accessed 4 October 2007).

Day, C. (1997) 'Being a professional in schools and universities: Limits, purposes and possibilities for development', *British Educational Research Journal*, vol.23, no.2, pp. 193-208.

Day, C. (1999) *Developing teachers: the challenges of lifelong learning*, London, Falmer Press.

Day, C. (2000) 'Beyond transformational leadership', *Educational Leadership*, vol.57, no.7, pp. 56-59.

Derpak, D. & Yarema, J. (2002) 'Climate control', *Principal Leadership*, vol.3, no.4, pp.42-45.

Desimone, L. (2009) 'How can we best measure teacher's professional development and its effects on teachers and students?' *Educational Researcher* vol.38, no.3, pp. 181-199.

Desimone, L., Porter, A., Birman, B., Garet, M. & Suk Yoon, K. (2002) 'How do district management and implementation strategies relate to the quality of the professional development that districts provide to teachers?', *Teachers College Record*, vol.104, no.7, pp.1265-1312.

Devos, A. (2002) 'Gender, work and workplace learning', in Reeve, F., Cartwright, M. & Edwards, R. (ed.), *Supporting lifelong learning*, vol.2, (pp. 51-63), London, Routledge Falmer.

Dictionary com. [online] <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/biased>
(Accessed 3 May 2011)

Dimmock, C. & Walker, A. (2003) 'Developing comparative and international educational leadership and management: A cross-cultural model', in Preedy, M., Glatter, R. & Wise, C. (eds.), *Strategic Leadership and Educational Improvement*, (pp.77-92), London, Open University & Paul Chapman.

Dimmock, C. & Walker, A. (2005) *Educational leadership: culture and diversity*, London, Sage Publications.

DiPaola, M. (2003) 'Conflict and change: Daily challenges for school leaders', in Bennett, N., Crawford, M. & Cartwright, M. (eds.), *Effective Educational Leadership*, (pp. 143-158). London, Open University & Paul Chapman.

Downey, L., Roberts, J. & Stough, C. (2011) 'Workplace culture emotional intelligence and trust in the prediction of workplace outcomes', *Journal of Business Science and Applied Management*, vol.6, no.1, pp.30-40.

Drago-Severson, E. & Pinto, K. (2006) 'School leadership for reducing teacher isolation: Drawing from the well of human resources', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, vol. 9, no.2, pp.129-155.

Drever, E., (2003) *Using semi structured interviews in small-scale research. A teacher's guide*. Glasgow, The SCRE Centre, University of Glasgow.

Drew, C., Hardman, M. & Hosp, J. (2008) *Designing and Conducting Research in Education*, California, Sage Publications.

DuFour, R. (2002) 'The learning centered principal', *Educational Leadership*, vol.59, no.8, pp.12-15.

DuFour, R. (2004) 'Schools as learning communities. What is a 'professional learning community'?', *Educational Leadership*, vol.61, no.8, pp. 6-11.

Eaker, R. & Gonzalez, D. (2006) 'Leading in professional learning communities', *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*, vol.24, no.1, pp.6-13.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Lowe, A. (1991) *Management research: An introduction*, London, Sage Publications.

Edmonds, R. (1979) 'Effective schools for the urban poor', *Educational Leadership*, vol. 37, no.10, pp.15 - 24.

Eisner, E. (1992) 'Objectivity in educational research', *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol.22, no.1, pp.10-15.

Ellis, J. (1990) 'Informal education – a Christian perspective', in Jeffs T. & Smith M. (eds.), *Using Informal Education*, Buckingham, Open University Press. [online]
<http://www.infed.org/archives/usinginformaleducation/ellis.htm>
(Accessed 2 March 2011)

Elmore, R. (2002) 'Hard questions about practice', *Educational leadership*, vol.59, no.8, pp. 22-25.

Eraut, M. (1994) *Developing professional knowledge and competence*, London, The Falmer Press.

Eraut, M. (2004) 'Informal learning in the workplace', *Studies in continuing education*, vol.26, no.2, pp.247-273.

Eraut, M., Alderton, J., Cole, G. & Senker, P. (2002) 'The impact of the manager on learning in the workplace', in Reeve, F., Cartwright, M. & Edwards, R. (eds), *Supporting lifelong learning*, vol.2, (pp. 91-108), London, RoutledgeFalmer.

Eurydice (2007/08) Eurybase. 'The Information Database on Education systems in Europe: The Education System in Cyprus', [online] http://www.refernet.org.cy/publications/Agencies/Pdfs/CY_EN%5BCyprus%20Dossier%5D.pdf (Accessed 6 February 2011).

Floyd, A. & Arthur, L. (2010) 'Researching from within: Moral and ethical issues and dilemmas', Presented at SRHE Annual Conference: Cardiff.

Fullan, M. (2005) *Leadership & sustainability: System thinkers in action*, California, Corwin Press.

Fullan, M. (2007) 'Change the terms for teacher learning', *National Staff Development Council*, vol. 28, no.3, pp.35-36.

Fullan, M. & Newton, E. (1988) 'School principals and change processes in the secondary school', *Canadian Journal of Education*, vol.13, no.3, pp . 404-422.

Gibson, W., Tesone, V., & Buchalski, M. (2000) 'The leader as mentor', *Journal of Leadership and Organisational Studies*, vol.7, no.3, pp.56-67.

Goleman, D. (1995) *Emotional intelligence*, USA, Bantam Books.

Goldman, E. (1998) 'The Significance of leadership style', *Educational Leadership*, vol.55, no.7, pp.20-22.

Goodall, J., Day, C., Lindsay, G., Muijs, D. & Harris, A. (2005) *Evaluating the impact of continuing professional development*, Nottingham, Department of Education and Skills, Research Report RR659 [online] <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/people/christopher.dav> (Accessed 3 March 2011)

Good, J. & Weaver, A. (2003) 'Creating learning communities to meet teachers' needs in professional development'. *Journal of in-Service Education*, vol. 29, no.3, pp.439-450.

Gronn, P. (2002) 'Distributed Leadership', in Leithwood K., Hallinger, P., Seashore-Louis, K., Furman-Brown, G., Gronn, P., Mulford, W. & Riley, K. (eds) *Second International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration* (pp.653-697), Boston, Kluwer Academic Publisher.

Grosbie, T. (2006) 'Using activity diaries: Some methodological lessons', *Journal of research Practice*, vol.2, no.1, Article D1.
[online] <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/22/68>
(Accessed 12 August 2007)

General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland (GTCNI) (2010). 'School-based professional development': A report of the GTCNI.
[online]
[http://arrts.gtcni.org.uk/gtcni/bitstream/2428/96693/1/School Based Report April2010.pdf](http://arrts.gtcni.org.uk/gtcni/bitstream/2428/96693/1/School%20Based%20Report%20April2010.pdf) (Accessed 2 August 2011)

Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1994) 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research', in Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (pp. 105–117), Canada, Sage.

Guskey, T. (2002a) 'Professional development and teacher change', *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, vol.8, no.3/4, pp.381-391.

Guskey, T. (2002b) 'Does it make a difference? Evaluating professional development', *Educational Leadership*, vol.59, no.6, pp.45-51.

Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1986) 'The social context of effective schools', *American Journal of Education*, vol.94, no.3, pp.328-55.

Hammersley, M. (1990) *Reading ethnographic research: A critical guide*, London, Longmans.

Hargreaves, A. (1994) *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers work and culture in the postmodern age*, London, Cassell.

Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (2000) 'Mentoring in the new millennium', *Theory into Practice*, vol. 39, no.1, pp.50-56.

Harrison, R. (2003) 'Learning for professional development', in Kydd, L., Anderson, L. & Newton, W. (eds.), *Leading People and*
252

Teams in Education, (pp.29-42), London, Open University & Paul Chapman.

Harrison, J., Lawson, T. & Wortley, A. (2005) 'Mentoring the beginning teacher: Developing professional autonomy through critical reflection on practice', *Reflective Practice*, vol.6, no.3, pp.419-441.

Harris, A., Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P. & Hopkins, D. (2007) 'Distributed leadership and organisational change: Reviewing the evidence', *Journal of Educational Change*, vol.8, pp 337–347.

Harvey, L. (2004) 'Analytic Quality Glossary', Quality Research International, [on line]
<http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/>
(Accessed 2 February 2011)

Holland, J. & Ramazanoglu, C. (1994) 'Power and interpretation in researching young women's sexuality', in Maynard, M. & Purvis, J. *Researching women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective* (pp125-148), London, Taylor and Francis.

Holstein, J. & Gubrium, J. (2004) 'The active interview', in Silverman, D., (ed), *Qualitative Research. theory, method and practice*, (pp.140-161), London, Sage.

Honey, P. & Mumford, A. (1992) *The Manual of Learning Styles*, (3rd.ed.), Maidenhead, Peter Honey Learning.

Hord, S. (1997) *Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*, Austin, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Hord, S., & Hirsh. S. (2009) 'The principal's role in supporting learning communities', *Educational Leadership*, vol.66, no.5, pp.22–23.

Horner, M. (2003) 'Leadership theory reviewed', in Bennett, N. Crawford, M. & Cartwright, M. (eds.), *Effective Educational Leadership*, (pp. 27-43). London, Open University & Paul Chapman.

Howe, K. (1998) 'Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility thesis or dogmas die hard', *Educational Researcher*, vol.17, no. 8, pp.10-16.

Johnson, A. (1990) 'Time-allocation research: The costs and benefits of alternative methods' in Rogers, L. & Schlossman, P.(eds), *Intra- Household Resource Allocation: Issues and Methods for Development Policy and Planning*, [online] <http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unubooks/80733e/80733E0h.htm> (Accessed 7 June 2007)

Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2008) *Educational Research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches*, California, Sage Publications.

Johnson, B. & Onwuegbuzie, A. (2004) 'Mixed methods Research: A research paradigm whose time has come', *Educational Researcher*, vol.33, no.7, pp.14-26.

Karagiorgi, Y. & Nicolaidou, M. (2009) 'Primary school leaders' approaches towards staff development in Cyprus schools', *ISEA*, vol.37, no.3, pp.69-81.

Keep, E. & Rainbird, H. (2002) 'Towards the learning organisation?', in Reeve, F., Cartwright, M. & Edwards, R. (eds.), *Supporting*

lifelong learning, vol.2, (pp. 64-90), London,
RoutledgeFalmer.

Kelle, U. (2005). "Emergence' vs 'forcing' of empirical data? A crucial problem of 'grounded theory' reconsidered'. *FORUM: Qualitative Social Research Sozialforschung*, vol.6, no.2, Art 27. [online] <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/467/1000> (Accessed 23 July 2009)

Keohane, N. (2005) 'On Leadership', *Perspectives on Politics*, vol.3, no.4, pp.705-722.

King, D. (2002) 'The changing shape of leadership', *Educational Leadership*, vol.59, no.8, pp.61-63.

Knowles, M. (1980) *The modern practice of adult education*, New York, Adult Education.

Kohm, B. & Nance, B. (2007). Principals who learn. Asking the right questions, seeking the best solutions. Virginia: ASCD.

Kohm, B (2007) 'Developing a collaborative culture', in Kohm, B. & Nance, B. (eds), *Principals who Learn. Asking the Right Questions. Seeking the best Solutions*, Virginia, ASCD

Kolb, D. (1984) *Experiential learning. Experience as the source of learning and development*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall.

Kouzes, M. & Posner, Z. (2006) *A Leader's legacy*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Lambert, L. (1998a) 'How to build leadership capacity', *Educational Leadership*, vol.55, no.7, pp.17-19.

Lambert, L. (1998b). *Building leadership capacity in schools*, Virginia, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*, New York, Cambridge University Press.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (2002) 'Legitimate peripheral participation in communities', in Harrison, R., Reeve, F., Hanson A. & Clarke,

J. (eds) *Supporting lifelong learning. Perspectives on learning*, vol.1, (pp.111-126). London, Open University & RoutledgeFalmer.

Lee, T., Fuller, A., Ashton D., Butler, P., Felstead, A., Unwin, L. & Walters, S. (2004) 'Workplace learning: Main themes & perspectives', in Learning as Work Research Paper, No. 2. [online]

<http://learningaswork.cf.ac.uk/outputs/Workplace Learning Final.pdf>

(Accessed 3 May 2011)

Le Gallais, T. (2003) 'From native to stranger... and back again?' Paper presented @ THE BERA Annual Conference, 10th September Conference, University of Edinburgh.

Leithwood, K. (1992) 'Transforming leadership. The move toward transformational Leadership', *Educational Leadership*. vol.49, no.5, pp. 8-12.

Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A. & Hopkins, D. (2006) *Successful School Leadership: What it is and how it influences pupil learning*, Nottingham, NCSL.

Lepard, D. & Foster, A. (2003) *Powerful leadership development*, Canada, Corwin Press.

Lichtman, M. (2006) *Qualitative research in education*, California, Sage Publications.

Little, J. (1990) 'The persistence of privacy: Autonomy and initiative in teachers' professional relations', *Teachers College Record*, vol.91 no.4, pp. 551-532.

Lindstrom, P. & Speck, M. (2004) *The principal as professional development leader*, California, Corwin Press.

Lovett, S. & Gilmore, A. (2003) 'Teachers' Learning Journeys: The quality learning circle as a model of professional development', *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, vol.14, no.2, pp.189-211.

Lumby, J. (1997) 'The learning organisation', in Bush, T. & Middlewood, D. (eds), *Managing People in Education*, (pp. 31-42), London, Paul Chapman Publishing.

Mahony, T. (2004) *Principal headship*, Wales, Crown House Publishing.

Mandell, B. & Pherwani, S. (2003) 'Relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership style: A gender comparison', *Journal of Business and Psychology*, vol.17, no.3, pp.387-404.

Marsick, V. & Watkins, K. (2002) 'Envisioning new organisations for learning' in Reeve, F., Cartwright, M. & Edwards, R. (ed.), *Supporting lifelong learning*, vol. 1, (pp.34-50), London, RoutledgeFalmer

Martidou-Forsie, D., Theofilides, C., Koutselini, M., Euripidou, A. & Bouzakis, S. (2009). *Lifelong learning and Teachers' Professional Development*, Nicosia, IPR [Greek]

Matthews P., (1999) 'Workplace learning: developing a holistic model' *The Learning Organisation*, vol.6, no.1, pp.18–29.

Matthews, P. (2009) *How do school leaders successfully lead learning?* Nottingham, NCSL.

Megginson, D. & Whitaker, V. (2003) *Continuing professional development*, London, CIPD.

Miller, G., Dingwall, R., & Murphy, E. (2004) 'Using qualitative data and analysis. Reflections on organisational research', in Silverman, D. (ed.), *Qualitative Research. Theory, Method and Practice* (pp.325-341), London, Sage.

Miller, G. & Fox, K. (2004) 'Building bridges: the possibility of analytic dialogue between ethnography, conversation analysis and Foucault', in Silverman, D. (ed.), *Qualitative Research: theory, method and practice*, (pp.35-55), London, Sage.

Miller, G. & Glassner, E. (2004) 'The 'inside' and the 'outside': Finding realities in interviews', in Silverman, D. (ed.), *Qualitative Research. theory, method and practice*, (pp.125-139), London, Sage.

Mitchell, C. & Castle, J. (2005) 'The instructional role of elementary school principals', *Canadian Journal of Education*, vol.28, no. 3, pp. 409-433.

Moec (2007) Strategic Planning for education: the whole reform of our Educational system. [online]

http://www.paideia.org.cy/upload/Arthrografia/17_1_2008_st

[ratigikos shediasmos anatheorimenos.pdf](#) (Accessed 2 June 2009)

Mohr, N. (1998) 'Creating effective study groups for principals', *Educational Leadership*, vol.55, no.7, pp.41-44.

Morris, M., Chrispeels, J. & Burke, P. (2003) 'The power of two: Linking external with internal teachers' professional development' *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol.84, no.10, pp. 764-769.

Murphy, J. (1990) 'Principal instructional leadership', in Thurston, P. & Lotto L. (eds.), *Perspectives on the school. Advances in educational administration*, vol.1 (B), (pp.163-200). Canada, JAI Press Inc.

NCSL (2003) 'Schools as Learning Organisations: A review of the literature', [online]
[http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=13127
&p=0](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=13127&p=0) (Accessed 3 February 2011).

NCSL (2007) 'What we know about school leadership', [online]
[http://www.mp.gov.rs/resursi/dokumenti/dok111-eng-what-we-know-
about-school-leadership.pdf](http://www.mp.gov.rs/resursi/dokumenti/dok111-eng-what-we-know-about-school-leadership.pdf) (Accessed 3 March 2011)

NCSL (2010) 'Learning-centred Leadership: Towards personalised learning centred leadership', [online]
<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/lcl-towards-personalised-lcl.pdf> (Accessed 3 March 2011)

Northhouse, P. (2004) *Leadership theory and practice*, London, Sage Publications.

OECD (2006): 'New OECD Activity on Recognition of non-formal and informal Learning. Guidelines for Country Participation', [online]
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/19/6/41782275.pdf> (Accessed 5 March 2011)

OECD (2007), Improving School Leadership Activity Education and Training Policy Division [online]
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/35/44/38574871.pdf> (Accessed 15 January 2011)

OECD (2010) Teachers' Professional Development: Europe in international comparison (TALIS). [online]
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/school->

[education/doc/talis/report_en.pdf](#) (Accessed 15 January 2011)

O'Neill, J. (2003) 'Managing through teams', in Kydd, L., Anderson, L. & Newton, W. (eds.), *Leading People and Teams in Education*, (pp.215-228), London, Open University & Paul Chapman.

Pashiardis, P. (2004) *Educational Leadership*, Athens, Metechmio.[Greek]

Peräkylä, A. (2004) 'Reliability and validity in research based on naturally occurring social interaction', in Silverman, D., (ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, (pp.283-304), London, Sage.

Peterson, K., (2002) 'Positive or negative', *Journal of Staff Development*, vol.23, no.2, pp.53-58.

Phillips, J. (2003) 'Powerful learning creating learning communities in urban school reform', *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, vol.18, no.3, pp. 240-258.

- Pill, A. (2005) 'Models of professional development in the education and practice of new teachers in higher education', *Teaching in Higher Education*, vol.10, no.4, pp. 175-188.
- Reeves, D. (2006) *The learning leader. How to focus school improvement for better results*, Alexandria, ASCD.
- Reeves, D. (2007) 'Leading to change. How do you change school culture?' *Educational Leadership*, vol.64, no.4, pp.92-94.
- Reeves, J., Forde, C., Morris, B. & Turner, E. (2003) 'Social processes, work-based learning and the Scottish Qualification for headship', in Kydd, L., Anderson, L. & Newton, W. (eds.), *Leading People and Teams in Education*, (pp.57-70), London, Open University & Paul Chapman.
- Reischmann J. (2004) 'Andragogy. History, meaning, context, function', [online] <http://www.andragogy.net> (Accessed 22 July 2010).
- Robinson, V. (2010) 'From instructional leadership to leadership capabilities', *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, vol.9, no.1, pp. 1-26.

Robson, C. (1993) *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers.

Rogers, A. (2002) 'Learning and adult education', in Harrison, R., Reeve, F., Hanson, A. & Clarke, J. *Supporting lifelong learning. Perspectives on learning*, vol.1, (pp.8-24), London, Open University & Routledge Falmer.

Rooney, J. (2005a) 'The principal connection/school culture: An invisible essential', *Educational Leadership*, vol.62, no.5, pp.85-86.

Rooney, P. (2005b) 'Researching from the inside — does it compromise validity? A discussion. Level3', [online] <http://level3.dit.ie/html/issue3/rooney/rooney4.htm>
(Accessed 22 July 2010)

Rosenholtz, S. (1989) *Teacher's workplace: The social organisation of schools*, New York, Longman.

Rosser, M., (2005) 'Leadership and mentoring: Chief executive officers perspectives', *Association of Leadership Educators*, Annual Conference. [online]

<http://www.leadershipeducators.org/Resources/Documents/Conferences/Wilmington/rosser.pdf> (Accessed 22 July 2010)

Scandura, T. & Williams, E. (2000) 'Research methodology in management: current practices, trends, and implications for future research', *The Academy of Management Journal*, vol.43, no.6, pp.1248-1264.

Schofield, J. (1993) 'Increasing the generalisability of qualitative research', in Hammersley, M.,(ed), *Educational Research: Current Issues*, (pp.91-113), London, Open University & Paul Chapman Publishing.

Schön, D. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*, London, Temple Smith.

Schön, D (2002) 'From technical rationality to reflection in action', in Harrison, R., Reeve, A., Hanson, A. & Clarke, J. (eds), *Supporting lifelong learning. Perspectives on learning*, vol.1, (pp.40-61), London, Routledge Press.

Senge, P. (1990) *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organisation*, New York, Doubleday.

Senge, P., Cambron - McCabe, N., Lucas, T., Smith, B., Dutton, J. & Kleiner, A. (2000) *Schools that learn*, New York, Doubleday.

Sharpe, R. (2004) 'How do professionals learn and develop? Implications for staff and educational developers', in Baume, D. & Kahn, P., *Enhancing Staff & Educational Development*, (pp. 133-153), London, Routledge Falmer.

Silverman, D (2005- 2nd ed) *Doing Qualitative Research*, London, Sage Publications.

Smith, K. (2001) 'David A. Kolb on experiential learning', *The encyclopedia of informal education*, [online] <http://www.infed.org/b-explrn.htm> (Accessed 3 June 2011).

Snape, D. & Spencer, L. (2003) 'The foundations of qualitative research', in Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J., (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*, (pp.1-23), London, Sage Publications.

Snow-Gerono, J. (2005) 'Professional development in a culture of inquiry: PDS teachers identify the benefits of professional learning communities', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 21, pp.241-256.

Somech, A. (2005) 'Directive versus participative leadership: Two complementary approaches to managing school effectiveness', *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol.41, no.5, pp.777-800.

Southworth, G. (2001) *Leading learning and teaching primary schools*, NCSL, Nottingham, United Kingdom.

Southworth, G. (2003) 'Learning centered leadership: the only way to go', *Australian Council for Educational Research* [online], http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=apc_monographs (Accessed 28 November 2011).

Southworth, G. (2004) *How leaders influence what happens in classrooms*, Nottingham, NCSL.

Spillane, J. (2003) 'Educational leadership', *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, vol.25, no.4, pp.343-346.

Spillane, J., Sherer, J. & Goldren, A. (2005) 'Distributed leadership: Leadership practice and the situation', in Hoy, K., & Miskel, C., *Educational Leadership and Reform*, (pp.149-168), Connecticut, Information Age Publishing.

Stoll, L. (2003) 'School culture and improvement', in Preedy, M., Glatter, R., & Wise, C. (eds.), *Strategic Leadership and Educational Improvement*, (pp.93-108), London, Open University & Paul Chapman.

Strauss, A. (1987) *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*, Cambridge, The Cambridge University Press.

The Free Dictionary. [online] <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/bias>
(Accessed 12 July 2010).

Thompson, S., Gregg, L. & Niska, J. (2004) 'Professional learning communities, leadership, and student learning. Research in middle level', *Education Online*, vol.28, no.1, pp.1-15.

Tomlinson, H. (2004) *Educational leadership. Personal growth for professional development*, London, Sage Publications.

Trochim, D. (2006) 'Research methods knowledge base', Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing. [online]
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/contents.php>
(Accessed 9 April 2010).

Voulalas Z. & Sharpe F. (2005) 'Creating schools as learning communities: Obstacles and processes', *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol.43, no.2, pp. 187-208.

Wenger, E. (2002) 'Communities of practice and social learning systems', in Reeve, F., Cartwright, M. & Edwards, R., *Supporting lifelong learning*, vol.2, (pp.160-179), London, Open University & Routledge Falmer.

Wheatley, J. (1999) *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world*, San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Wilkinson, S. (2004) 'Focus group research', in Silverman, D. (ed.), *Qualitative Research. Theory, method and practice*, (pp.177-199), London, Sage Publications.

Willcoxson, L. & Millett, B. (2000) 'The management of organisational culture', *Australian Journal of Management & Organisational Behaviour*, vol.3, no.2, pp.91-99.

Woods, P., Bennett, N., Harvey, J., & Wise, C. (2004) 'Variabilities and Dualities in Distributed Leadership', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol.32, no.4, pp.439-457.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Brief description of the educational system in Cyprus

Cyprus is an island located in the north-eastern part of the Mediterranean region. The formal education system in Cyprus is highly conservative, centralised and controlled by the state (Pashiardis, 2004). The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the implementation of educational laws, the preparation of new legislation and the financing of schools. School curricula and textbooks are determined by governmental agencies, along with guidelines on how to implement the national curriculum. Schools at all levels are visited by the state Inspectorate, which is responsible for evaluating schools. Private schools are owned and administered by individuals or committees, but are nonetheless liable to supervision and inspection by the Ministry of Education. Thus, direct control of activities in schools is undertaken by the Inspectorate which, apart from inspecting teachers, has responsibility for teacher support, disciplinary matters and curriculum development. It also carries out a wide range of administrative functions.

The teacher evaluation system was first set up in 1976 and remains unchanged because of the strong resistance of the teachers' union against any attempts to make changes. Thus, the current system for promoting teachers to assistant

headteachers and then to headteachers is grounded on years of teaching experience rather than on teaching practice and qualifications, which acts as a numbing factor on teachers' intrinsic motives to improve and develop (Karagiorgi & Nicolaidou, 2009).

Appendix 2 - Letter addressed to headteachers

Androula Michael
Anexartisias 51, 2566 Lymbia
Tel 22523645 99743185
Email: anplatou@cytanet.com.cy
26/9/2008

To the headteacher of Primary School

Dear,

I am studying for the EdD of the Open University – UK – and I am researching the types of formal and informal learning opportunities teachers have in their workplace and how these opportunities are facilitated or constrained by the way headteachers enact their leadership. I would like to work with schools, where the headteacher is interested in this research. For the selection of my data, I will need to do the following during this school year (in sequence of time):

- Interview the school’s inspector concerning the issues of continuing professional development and the headteachers’ role.
- Interview a school’s headteacher concerning the above issues.
- Distribute questionnaires to school teachers and assistant headteachers.

- Cooperate with teachers who volunteer to keep a diary, marking the learning opportunities they have experienced over a specific time period of four weeks.

Protecting participants' personal data would be my main and an inviolable rule during every phase of the research. For that reason I intent to use pseudonyms for the names of the schools, the staff and inspectors.

I have already received the permission of the Ministry of Education of Cyprus, which I enclose, and now I am kindly asking you to decide whether you would like your school to take part in my research.

Hoping for your positive reply, I will phone you in about a week to hear your final decision.

Respectfully

.....

Androula Michael.

Appendix 3 - Interview schedule for inspectors

Structure of the inspectors' interview schedule

Interview with the Inspector

Date:

- 1. For how long have you been a headteacher and for how long an inspector?
For how many schools are you responsible?

- 2. How do you perceive a headteacher's role in teachers' accessing formal and informal learning opportunities?
 - 2.1. How do you perceive the headteacher's role in promoting teachers' professional development?
 - 2.2. Are there other persons in your schools with the responsibility for staff development?

- 3.
 - 3.1. How would you interpret the expression 'teacher's learning opportunities in the workplace'?
 - 3.2. What are the differences between formal and informal learning opportunities in the workplace?
 - 3.3. Can you give examples of some of the informal learning opportunities teachers in your schools have in their workplace?

4.

4.1. How important and valuable are these learning opportunities:

4.1.1. For the teachers themselves?

4.1.2. For their students?

4.1.3. For the whole school?

4.2. How can these informal learning opportunities be and become more useful for teachers?

5. What formal learning opportunities do teachers have in your schools, including opportunities to go out of school to courses and conferences?

5.1. How do you choose the themes/subjects teachers need for development?

5.2. Do teachers or headteachers ask you to organise courses/seminars/conferences on specific subjects?

5.3. Do you set any priorities for teachers' professional development? For example, do you prefer to develop your schools' teachers on subject-related themes, on methodology themes or on management?

6. Who has access to these opportunities? What are the criteria for choosing or entrusting a teacher to follow a formal learning programme?

6.1. Do you believe that every teacher has an equal opportunity to gain a learning opportunity in his/her school?

6.2. Are there any procedures set up to ensure this equality (for formal opportunities)?

7. How do headteachers usually react when a seminar/course/conference needs to be organised in their school?

7.1. How do headteachers usually react when they are asked to send teachers on a seminar/course/conference?

7.2. How does headteacher leadership style influence teachers' access to learning opportunities?

7.3. Can you give examples of headteachers (or other members of the staff) who encourage teachers to attend courses/seminars/conferences? How do they encourage teachers (only verbally, by his/her example, by his/her general attitude)?

7.4. Do teachers need encouragement in order to seek their professional development? Are they influenced by their headteacher's reactions and general attitudes towards accessing learning opportunities and professional development?

8. What are the characteristics of the school that has an effective learning culture?

8.1. Describe which working conditions at the school level can contribute to teachers' professional development.

8.2. Discuss the following list, which includes organisational-structural working conditions that may support teachers' access to learning opportunities. Please comment on how each situation can support teacher's access to learning opportunities, according to your opinion, and how often that situation is presented in your schools.

1. Teaching teams and team working

2. Mentoring

3. Access to books, articles and other knowledge

4. Access to the internet

5. Access to other material (e.g. information about conferences and seminars)

6. Pair observation

7. Collective sense of responsibility within school

8. Access to teachers' reports on evaluation (written by the headteacher)

9. Participation in the decision making process

10. Time for learning and reflection within organisation

11. Space within organisation for learning and reflection

12. Inspection

13. Colleagues having advisory roles

14. Many leaders at many levels (e.g. programme coordinators, lesson coordinators)

9. Can a specific school culture within each school help teachers maximise their access to learning opportunities within their school?

- 9.1. How can this school culture you described be best developed?
- 9.2. What is the role of the headteacher in creating and developing this school culture?

10. Discuss the following list, which includes cultural working conditions that may support teachers’ access to learning opportunities. Please comment on how each situation can support teacher’s access to learning opportunities, according to your opinion, and how often that situation is presented in your schools.

- 1. Collegiality collaboration
- 2. Collective goal setting
- 3. Common vision and expectations defined within school
- 4. Group identity developed within schools
- 5. Strong sense of responsibility for the quality of education offered
- 6. Teachers feel that they are trusted and norms of openness are predominated within school
- 7. Teachers feel safe to experiment with innovations and improvements
- 8. Teachers are supported when they take risks to try out new methods or adopt new ideas
- 9. Teachers feel strong emotional support for what they are doing
- 10. Teachers are encouraged to follow conferences and seminars for their professional development, during their free time
- 11. Teachers are encouraged to follow conferences and seminars for their professional development, during school time
- 12. Changing within the school is a suggested process
- 13. Use of problem-solving approach to solve schools’ issues

14. Reflection of practice

15. Creativity and criticality are encouraged

16. Teachers are encouraged to show their passion, enthusiasm and dedication to their pupils and to their profession.

11. How are headteachers advised or prepared to undertake this new role: the role of creating the right culture in schools and developing the right organisational and structural conditions which can maximise teachers' access to learning opportunities?
12. Do you have a role to play in teachers' professional development, and what is that?
- 12.1. How would you like to further enhance and develop your schools to contribute to teachers' professional development?

Appendix 4 - Interview schedule for headteachers

Interview with the Headteacher

Date:

- 1.
 - 1.1. How do you perceive your role – as a headteacher – in promoting teachers’ continuing professional development?
 - 1.2. Are there other persons, in your school, with the responsibility for staff development?
- 2.
 - 2.1. What do you understand by the expression ‘teacher’s formal learning opportunities in the workplace’? Give examples.
 - 2.2. What do you understand by the expression ‘teacher’s informal learning opportunities in the workplace’? Give examples.
 - 2.3. What are the differences between formal and informal teacher’s learning opportunities in the workplace?
- 3.
 - 3.1. How important and valuable are these learning opportunities, according to your personal point of view:
 - 3.1.1. For the teachers themselves?
 - 3.1.2. For their students?
 - 3.1.3. For the whole school?

- 3.2. How can these opportunities become more useful and important to teachers?
4. What formal learning opportunities do teachers have in your school, including opportunities to go out of school to courses and conferences.
5. Can you mention some of the informal learning opportunities the teachers in your school have in their workplace?
6. How are the themes/subjects on which teachers need development chosen?
7. Does your school have any priorities for professional development? For example, is there a preference for developing your school teachers on subject-related themes, on methodology themes or on management?
8. Who has access to those opportunities?
 - 8.1. What are the criteria for choosing or entrusting a teacher to follow a formal learning programme?
9. Do you believe that every teacher has an equal opportunity to gain a learning opportunity in your school?
 - 9.1. How is the multiplication of new knowledge, gained by a teacher representing the school, promoted?
 - 9.2. Are there any procedures set up to ensure this equality (for formal and perhaps for informal opportunities)?
10. How do teachers usually react (teachers who are involved and the rest):

- 10.1. To formal learning opportunities when they are sent to follow a programme or a seminar or a conference (which they may like to go to or they may not or they may be indifferent)?
- 10.2. When teachers ask to go?
- 10.3. What is the proportion of teachers asking to go on courses?
- 10.4. To informal learning opportunities (learning through experiences when involved in a school process/ programme /or a group of teachers, through teacher's collaborations /teams)?
- 10.5. Do they recognise them?
- 10.6. Do they accept them with pleasure?
- 10.7. Do they feel indifferent to the opportunity or even refuse to follow it?
- 10.8. Do you have to encourage the teachers to attend courses?
- 10.9. Is there any competition in your school to attend courses?
- 10.10. Do you have opportunities for your professional development?
What are these opportunities?
- 10.11. Do you believe that you have been appropriately prepared to promote teachers' access to learning opportunities?
11. Discuss the following list, which includes organisational-structural working conditions that may support teachers' access to learning opportunities. Please comment on how each situation can support teacher's access to learning opportunities, according to your opinion, and how often that situation is presented in your schools.

1. Teaching teams and team working
2. Mentoring
3. Access to books, articles and other knowledge
4. Access to the internet
5. Access to other material (e.g. information about conferences and seminars)
6. Pair observation
7. Collective sense of responsibility within school
8. Access to teachers' reports on evaluation (written by the headteacher)
9. Participation in the decision making process
10. Time for learning and reflection within organisation
11. Space within organisation for learning and reflection
12. Inspection
13. Colleagues having advisory roles
14. Many leaders at many levels (e.g. programme coordinators, lesson coordinators)

12. Discuss the following list, which includes cultural working conditions that may support teachers' access to learning opportunities. Please comment on how each situation can support teacher's access to learning opportunities, according to your opinion, and how often that situation is presented in your schools.

1. Collegiality collaboration
2. Collective goal setting
3. Common vision and expectations defined within school

- 4. Group identity developed within schools

- 5. Strong sense of responsibility for the quality of education offered

- 6. Teachers feel that they are trusted and norms of openness are predominated within school

- 7. Teachers feel safe to experiment with innovations and improvements

- 8. Teachers are supported when they take risks to try out new methods or adopt new ideas

- 9. Teachers feel strong emotional support for what they are doing

- 10. Teachers are encouraged to follow conferences and seminars for their professional development, during their free time

- 11. Teachers are encouraged to follow conferences and seminars for their professional development, during school time

- 12. Changing within the school is a suggested process

- 13. Use of problem-solving approach to solve schools' issues

- 14. Reflection of practice

- 15. Creativity and criticality are encouraged

- 16. Teachers are encouraged to show their passion, enthusiasm and dedication to their pupils and to their profession.

13. What characteristics of the school promote an effective learning culture, according to your opinion?
- 13.1. Which working conditions at the school level, in general, contribute to teachers' professional development?
 - 13.2. Which of the working conditions you mentioned exists in your school?
 - 13.3. How would you like to further enhance and develop your school to contribute to teachers' professional development?

Appendix 5 - Teachers' questionnaire

Androula Michael
Anexartisias 51,
2566 Lymbia
anplatou@cytanet.com.cy
Tel.22523645 99743185

Dear teacher,

I am Androula Michael and I am conducting research as part of my EdD degree (Open University – UK). The research aims at investigating the types of formal and informal learning opportunities teachers have in their workplace and how these opportunities are facilitated or constrained by the way headteachers enact their leadership. This questionnaire is part of the above research.

Your point of view is very important in getting the whole picture of teachers' perceptions about the issue of teachers' access to learning opportunities. All responses will be anonymous. It is estimated that it will take you about 25 minutes. After you have answered the questions, please place the questionnaire in the envelope and put it in the box in the staff room. Please tick your name in the staff catalogue glued outside the box.

I believe it is important to add that formal learning opportunities in your workplace are defined in this study to mean the learning opportunities teachers are offered officially at their school or elsewhere. So, please have that in mind when answering this questionnaire.

Yours sincerely

Androula Michael

Teachers’ questionnaires

PART A

1. Please circle the answer with which you agree

1. I strongly disagree 2. I disagree 3. I don't know/I don't want to answer 4.

I agree 5. I strongly agree

1. There is/are person(s) in my school responsible for staff development	1 2 3 4 5
2. Formal learning opportunities I have in my school are valuable for me	1 2 3 4 5
3. Informal learning opportunities I have in my school are valuable for me	1 2 3 4 5
4. Formal learning opportunities I have in my school are valuable for my students	1 2 3 4 5
5. Informal learning opportunities I have in my school are valuable for my students	1 2 3 4 5
6. Learning opportunities I have in my school are valuable for the whole school organisation	1 2 3 4 5
7. I can learn something incidentally from my experience at work	1 2 3 4 5
8. I have an equal opportunity for accessing learning opportunities along with any other teacher in my school	1 2 3 4 5
9. All teachers have equal opportunities in accessing learning opportunities in my school	1 2 3 4 5
10. The criteria for choosing a teacher to follow a formal learning programme are made clear and explicit	1 2 3 4 5
11. I like to attend courses, seminars and conferences	1 2 3 4 5
12. My willingness to follow courses, seminars and conferences depends on how interesting they are expected to be	1 2 3 4 5
13. My willingness to follow courses, seminars and conferences depends on the subject	
14. My willingness to attend courses, seminars and conferences depends on their usefulness to me in the classroom	1 2 3 4 5
15. My willingness to attend courses, seminars and conferences depends on their usefulness to me in my professional development	1 2 3 4 5
16. My willingness to attend courses, seminars and conferences	1 2 3 4 5

depends on their usefulness in developing my career, e.g. getting a promotion

2. The following list includes formal and informal learning opportunities teachers may have in their workplace. Please state how often you have had each of the following opportunities in your workplace during this school year.

1. Never 2. Once 3. Rarely 4. Often 5. Very often

I had new knowledge/skills/ attitudes after	1 2 3 4 5
1. Reading an article	1 2 3 4 5
2. Reading a book	1 2 3 4 5
3. Trying out a new strategy/approach in my teaching	1 2 3 4 5
4. Listening to my colleagues' experiences	1 2 3 4 5
5. Reflecting on my own practice	1 2 3 4 5
6. Reflecting on one of my pupils' comments on my practice	1 2 3 4 5
7. Reflecting on one of my colleagues' comments on my practice	1 2 3 4 5
8. Reflecting on my headteacher's comments on my practice	1 2 3 4 5
9. Reflecting in practice during the decision-making process	1 2 3 4 5
10. Sharing experiences with my colleagues	1 2 3 4 5
11. Observing colleagues intentionally	1 2 3 4 5
12. Observing colleagues unintentionally	1 2 3 4 5
13. Cooperating with colleagues in planning	1 2 3 4 5
14. Discussing with parents or others	1 2 3 4 5

15. Participating in a workshop	1 2 3 4 5
16. Taking part in a staff meeting devoted to new knowledge relevant to teaching practice	1 2 3 4 5
17. Attending a conference	1 2 3 4 5
18. Participating in a seminar/training session as a representative of my school	1 2 3 4 5
19. Participating in a school project or programme	1 2 3 4 5
20. New experience gained accidentally during school break	1 2 3 4 5
21. New experience gained incidentally at unpredictable times. Example:	1 2 3 4 5
22. New experience gained accidentally in other occasions. Example:	1 2 3 4 5

3. If you had any other learning opportunities not mentioned in the list please describe them below:

.....

.....

.....

.....

PART B

The following list includes organisational-structural working conditions which may support teachers’ access to learning opportunities. On your right scale please circle the degree to which each working condition was present in your workplace during this school year.

1. Not at all 2. To a lesser degree 3. Enough 4. To a high degree
5. To a very high degree

Organisational-structural working conditions					
1. Teaching teams and team working	1	2	3	4	5
2. Mentoring	1	2	3	4	5
3. Access to books, articles and other knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
4. Access to the internet	1	2	3	4	5
5. Access to other material (e.g. information about conferences and seminars)	1	2	3	4	5
6. Peer observation	1	2	3	4	5
7. Access to teachers' reports of evaluation (written by the headteacher)	1	2	3	4	5
8. Participation in the decision making process	1	2	3	4	5
9. Time for learning and reflection within the organisation	1	2	3	4	5
10. Space within the organisation for learning and reflection	1	2	3	4	5
11. Useful feedback from inspectors (advisors)	1	2	3	4	5
12. Many leaders at many levels (e.g. programme coordinators, lesson coordinators)	1	2	3	4	5
13. Having the role of a leader in a specific sector within school unit	1	2	3	4	5

The following list includes cultural working conditions which may support teachers' access to learning opportunities. On your right scale circle the degree each working condition was present in your workplace during this school year.

1. Not at all 2. To a lesser degree 3. Enough 4. To a high degree
5. To a very high degree

1. Cultural working conditions					
2. Collegiality collaboration	1	2	3	4	5
3. Collective goal setting	1	2	3	4	5
4. Common vision and expectations defined within school	1	2	3	4	5

5. Group identity developed within schools	1 2 3 4 5
6. Strong sense of responsibility for the quality of education offered	1 2 3 4 5
7. Teachers feel that they are trusted and norms of openness are predominated within school	1 2 3 4 5
8. Teachers feel safe to experiment with innovations and improvements	1 2 3 4 5
9. Teachers are supported when they take risks to try out new methods or adopt new ideas	1 2 3 4 5
10. Teachers feel strong emotional support for what they are doing	1 2 3 4 5
11. Teachers are encouraged to follow conferences and seminars for their professional development, during their free time	1 2 3 4 5
12. Teachers are encouraged to follow conferences and seminars for their professional development, during school time	1 2 3 4 5
13. Use of problem-solving approach to solve schools' issues	1 2 3 4 5
14. Reflection of practice	
15. Creativity and criticality are encouraged	1 2 3 4 5
16. Teachers are encouraged to show their passion, enthusiasm and dedication to their pupils and to their profession	1 2 3 4 5

Please record the learning opportunities you had during this school year.

.....

.....

If you have any comments concerning the issue of learning opportunities within school, please state them:

.....

.....

Appendix 6- Learning diary

SELF ADMINISTERED LEARNING DIARIES											
WEEK1: -/01/08		The formal LO(s) I have during this week is/are:									
Informal learning opportunities		DATE						COMMENTS			
	I learned something new related to my teachers' profession:	MON	TUS	WEN	THU	FRI	W/END	COM		MENT	
		SCHOOL TIME	OUT OF SCHOOL	SCHOOL TIME	OUT OF SCHOOL	SCHOOL TIME	OUT OF SCHOOL	SCHOOL TIME	OUT OF SCHOOL	S -	next page
1	By reading an article or a book										
2	By trying out a new strategy in my classroom										
3	By listening to my colleagues' experience										
4	By reflecting on one of my pupils' comments on my practice										
5	By reflecting on one of my colleagues' comments on my practice										
6	By reflecting on one of my headteachers' comments on my practice										
7	By reflecting on my own practice										
8	By reflecting in practice during the decision-making process										
9	By sharing experiences with my colleagues										
10	By observing intentionally colleagues										
11	By observing unintentionally colleagues										
12	By cooperating with colleagues										
13	By discussing with parents or others										
14	By participating in a school project or programme										
15	During our school break										
16	At unpredictable times										
17	Other occasions? Eg could be television or radio programme										

Appendix 7- Focus group interview schedule

Teachers’ interviews

Interview with the group

Date:

- 1. Looking at the self administered learning diary you have been completing for four weeks, can you please analyse the informal learning opportunities you had during that time?
 - 1.1.How did you feel when engaging in each of those learning opportunities?
 - 1.2.How much did you enjoy your learning experiences?
 - 1.3.Were you encouraged to have access to those informal opportunities?
 - 1.4.Did you pursue those opportunities?
 - 1.5.Did you accept them with pleasure?

- 2. Do you believe that these learning experiences are important for teachers and why?
 - 2.1.How can these informal learning opportunities become more useful for teachers?

- 3. What formal learning opportunities did you have in your school this school year- including opportunities to go out of school to seminars, conferences and courses?

- 3.1. Did you have the opportunity to choose and how did you choose the course / seminar / conference you were going to follow?
- 3.2. How did you feel when you were sent to a course / seminar / conference?
- 3.3. How did you feel when other teachers were sent to a course / seminar / conference?
- 3.4. Did you have to ask your headteacher to send you on a course / seminar / conference?
4. Do you feel that you had an equal opportunity as every teacher in your school to gain a learning opportunity in your school? Can you explain how this works in your school?
5. What are your motives for pursuing learning opportunities?
 - 5.1. What are your motives for pursuing your professional development?
 - 5.2. Do you need encouragement in order to seek your professional development? Are you influenced by your headteacher's reactions and general attitudes towards accessing learning opportunities and professional development?
6. How do you perceive your headteacher's role in accessing formal and informal learning opportunities?
 - 6.1. What had (s)he done this year, which had help you accessing learning opportunities?
 - 6.2. How do you perceive your headteacher's role in promoting teachers' professional development?

6.3.Does your headteacher (or other member of the staff) encourage you to attend courses? How does (s) he encourages you? (Only verbally, by their example, by their general attitude???)

6.4.How would you describe the ideal role of a headteacher in developing his/her teachers professionally?

6.5.How would you describe the headteacher whose behaviour would constrain teachers’ accessing to learning opportunities?

7. Describe which working conditions at the school level can contribute to teachers’ professional development.

7.1.The following list includes organisational – structural working conditions which may support teachers’ access to learning opportunities. Please comment on how each situation can support teacher’s access to learning opportunities and whether that situation was present in your workplace during this school year.

- 1. Teaching teams and team working
- 2. Mentoring
- 3. Access to books, articles and other knowledge
- 4. Access to the internet
- 5. Access to other material (e.g. information about conferences and seminars)
- 6. Pair observation
- 7. Collective sense of responsibility within school
- 8. Access to teachers’ reports on evaluation (written by the headteacher)

9. Participation in the decision making process

10. Time for learning and reflection within organisation

11. Space within organisation for learning and reflection

12. Inspection

13. Colleagues having advisory roles

14. Many leaders at many levels (e.g. programme coordinators, lesson coordinators)

8. Can a specific school culture within each school help teachers maximum accessing in learning opportunities within their school?

8.1. How can this school culture you described be best developed?

8.2. What is the role of the headteacher in creating and developing this school culture?

8.3. The following list includes cultural working conditions which may support teachers' access to learning opportunities. Please comment on how each situation can support teacher's access to learning opportunities and whether that situation was present in your workplace during this school year.

1. Collegiality collaboration

2. Collective goal setting

3. Common vision and expectations defined within school

4. Group identity developed within schools

5. Strong sense of responsibility for the quality of education offered

6. Teachers feel that they are trusted and norms of openness are predominated within school

7. Teachers feel safe to experiment with innovations and improvements

8. Teachers are supported when they take risks to try out new methods or adopt new ideas

9. Teachers feel strong emotional support for what they are doing

10. Teachers are encouraged to follow conferences and seminars for their professional development, during their free time

11. Teachers are encouraged to follow conferences and seminars for their professional development, during school time

12. Changing within the school is a suggested process

13. Use of problem-solving approach to solve schools' issues

14. Reflection of practice

15. Creativity and criticality are encouraged

16. Teachers are encouraged to show their passion, enthusiasm and dedication to their pupils and to their profession.

Appendix 8- Characteristics of the teachers responding to questionnaires

As can be seen from Table 7.1 only two out of the 42 teachers were men. One out of two teachers had 11 to 20 years teaching experience and one out of six teachers had more than 21 years of experience. A percentage of 24% of teachers had a masters' degree. 79% of them were teachers responsible for a class whilst the remaining 21% taught lessons to different groups of children.

TABLE 7.1: Characteristics of the teachers who responded to questionnaires

Characteristics		Number of teachers			
		GVS (17)	SGS (16)	NS (14)	TOTAL N (percentage)
sex	Male	/	2	/	2 5%
	Female	15	13	12	40 95%
Teaching experience	1 to 10 years of experience	8	4	1	13 31%
	11 to 20 years of experience	5	8	9	23 54%
	More than 20 years	2	3	2	7 15%
Having postgraduate degree	Yes	4	3	3	10 24%
Teacher responsible for class	Yes	10	12	11	33 79%